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THE
BIRTHRIGHT,

AND OTHER TALES.

BY MRS. GORE,

AUTHORESS OF

"THE BANKER'S WIFE," "THE MAN OF FORTUNE," &c.

IN THREE VOLS.

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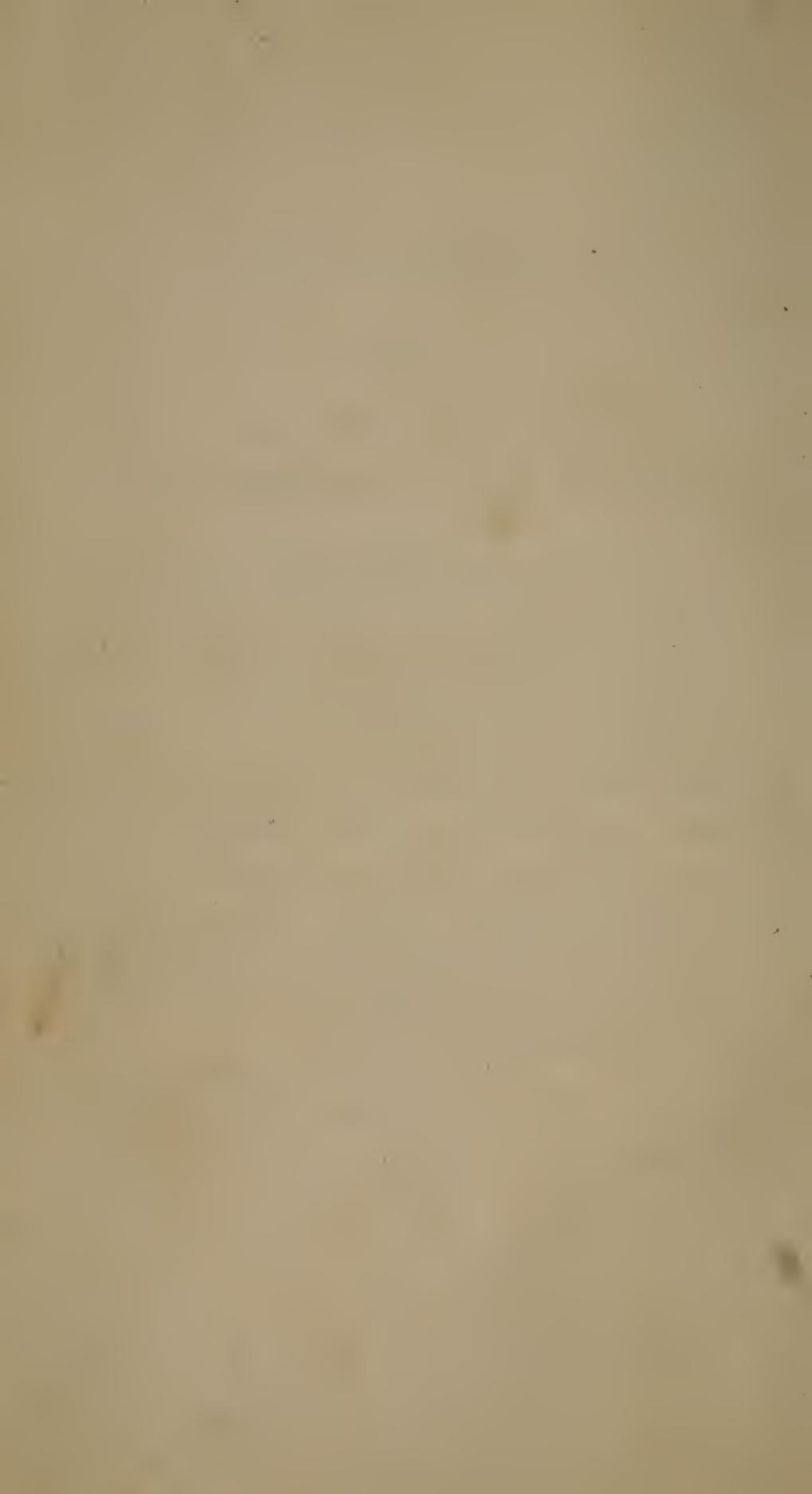
DEDICATION.

TO THE AUTHOR OF THE “DIARY OF A LATE PHYSICIAN.”

THE story of the Birthright is but a feeble shadowing forth of a striking anecdote, impressively related to me by yourself. Having abandoned the literary field for a more engrossing and important professional career, you wished me to make the tale my own, and all it has lost by the transfer, will be understood by the reader. Such as it is, let it serve as a memorial of your good will towards, dear Mr. Warren,

Yours, very sincerely,

C. F. G.



THE BIRTHRIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

I'll read you matter deep and dangerous,
As full of peril and adventurous spirit,
As to o'erwalk a current, roaring loud,
On the unsteadfast footing of a spear.

SHAKSPEARE.

“ IT was one of the bitterest winter mornings I had ever the evil fortune to encounter ; and a bitter morning on the cheerless, churlish pavement of the meaner quarters of the metropolis, is a far more dispiriting thing than when we meet it, face to face, on the hill side, or even amid the sublime solitude of a barren moor.”

“ Most true !” replied the young man to whom this observation was addressed, by a companion of more than double his years, as they sat together over their wine, in the dining-room of a fine old country mansion, named Holme Court, enjoying sweet converse which appeared to have led the elder of the two into a vein somewhat narrative.

“ As I was telling you, my dear Fareham, I had arrived in town at daybreak, by the mail ; and not chancing to find a hackney-coach, at the office, left my luggage to be forwarded, and walked stoutly on towards May Fair, in hopes of thawing my benumbed limbs. But if *I* was overcome with cold, what were the miserable and often, I fear, houseless outcasts whom here and there I encountered by the way ? At that untimely hour, wretchedness and vice alone are stirring. The rich, the happy, sleep. But those who do lack and suffer hunger, those most in need of rest and consolation, are wanderers by the wayside,—forbidden

to lose sight or sense of the anguish which assails their being."

The young man, thus addressed, involuntarily cast his eyes round the rich and well-warmed apartment, as if recognising, for the first time, the happiness of a lot cast in such pleasant places ;—a lot which rendered such painful pictures, as those described by his grave companion, ideal as a poet's dream.

" As I said before," resumed the narrator, " I trudged on and on, in the hope of keeping myself warm, in defiance of the beaten snow upon the pavement, and ice upon the kennels, on which a few wretched red-nosed urchins, with their hands thrust into their ragged pockets, were attempting to slide ; when, just as I was crossing a by-street of the lowest description, in the purlieus of Charing Cross, I was tempted to hail a coach, which I saw jogging at a distance ; and while waiting its leisurely approach (for both horses and driver appeared to be as hard-frozen as myself) ! I was struck by the

deplorable aspect of an old woman, seated on the doorstep of the wretched gin-shop beside which I was standing. It was barely daylight; that is, the oppressive mask of London smoke and London fog obscuring the face of day, produced the sort of dreary twilight which the Londoners call a winter's morning; and *there* sat the poor old creature, as deliberately as though the weather were June!"

"Waiting, perhaps, for the means, obtained from some charitable passer-by, to become a customer at the pernicious spot adjoining?"—observed the younger man.

"No! bestowing her care on a ragged infant, which she was hushing upon her knee. Never did I behold such a combination of age, filth, and wretchedness, as was exhibited in the countenance of that withered crone! Her face was as though unvisited for years by smiles or ablution. We are, perhaps, to blame for connecting the idea of wickedness with dirt and decrepitude; but that miserable old woman

struck me at once as a bad one, though literally all I knew of her was that she was ragged and wrinkled, and engaged in an office of humanity.—Such slaves are we to our prejudices!"

"My experience of life, I fear, is little worth," replied his young friend. "But I have seldom found extreme old age exposed to extreme destitution, where its antecedents had been praiseworthy."

"The hag I am describing to you," resumed the elder, "looked as though she had been never young and never virtuous. There was cunning in her deep-set eyes; there was ferocity in the hard lines encircling her shapeless mouth; and long before the arrival of the jingling vehicle for which I was waiting, I had discovered that what I had at first mistaken for an Irish lullaby murmured over the peevish infant, consisted of the most fiendish imprecations! Advancing a step or two towards her, I perceived that the poor little outcast on her knee had been a lovely creature, till wasted by the want

and privation which were probably the origin of its present wailing. Its little features were pinched with hunger, its little limbs blue with cold. It had scarcely strength to utter its fractious cries ; yet feeble as they were, they stirred up the wrath of the beldam, till her curses became converted into blows.—Yes ! my dear Fareham, before I could interpose, the already bruised limbs of the poor little outcast were visited with a severe beating from her withered hands !—”

“ Poor child !”—murmured the young man, slightly raising his shoulders, and drawing a heavy breath, as he replaced on the table, untasted, the glass of claret he had been conveying to his lips. “ Poor child of misery,—perhaps of shame.”

“ Certainly of shame,” rejoined his companion in a stern voice.

“ And probably predestined to a life of vice—of crime—”

“ No !” interrupted the narrator, as though

fully acquainted with the circumstances of the case,—“ predestined, on the contrary, to a life of luxury and joy ;—predestined to become the idol of loving hearts, the minion of beauty, the scholar of sages, the guest of princes !—”

Lord Fareham could scarcely refrain from a wondering smile at this extravagant apostrophe on the part of his usually taciturn host and kinsman Sir James De Lisle, which he was half inclined to attribute to the excellent champagne and claret they had been discussing. Yet both had drunk sparingly ; and the eye of the elder man, so far from exhibiting the exhilarating effects of wine, was hard and severe.

“ But how, may I ask, could you foresee all this ?”—said Lord Fareham, addressing his host.

“ I foresaw nothing, beyond the temporary alleviation the alms of my bestowing might be the means of insuring to the hapless child.”

“ By what means, then, have you since discovered the propitious change in the destinies of this wretched victim ?”—

Sir James hesitated for a moment ; then, fixed his large grey eyes sternly and searchingly on his young friend.

“ How did you manage to ascertain his after-fortunes ?”—persisted Lord Fareham, becoming almost agitated by the severe aspect of his kinsman.

“ Because,” resumed the original speaker, in a hoarse, but unflinching voice, “ because—*thou art the man !*”—

CHAPTER II.

'Tis not impossible
But one, the wickedest caitiff on the ground,
May seem as shy, as grave, as just, as absolute,
As Angelo.

SHAKSPEARE.

SOME days elapsed after the occurrence of the foregoing startling scene, before Lord Fareham fully recovered the disposal of his faculties.

His first impulse had been to burst into convulsive laughter, believing himself to be the victim of a scarcely justifiable mystification on the part of Sir James De Lisle ; who, though a family connexion of his own, was a man of singular character and habits.

But his explosion of merriment was met with so reproving and contemptuous a counte-

nance, that his next desire was to rush upon the man who sat regarding him with so withering a sneer, and tell him that he lied in his throat. But the hairs of his eccentric kinsman were grey, and his hand tremulous ; and taming down the vindictive feelings arising within him, the young nobleman contented himself with demanding further explanations, and declaring his utter disbelief in a tale so long withheld, and now, so inexplicably, so almost wantonly, revealed.

“ In such a case, mere asseveration is of course, valueless,” was the reply of De Lisle ; “ and but that I hold in my possession full proofs of all I have advanced, I should not have attempted to enlighten your mind as to the real nature of your worldly position. Come with me to London, and the evidence shall be laid before you, to destroy or publish, or suppress, according to your views of the case. As your mother’s nearest kinsman, as the companion of her childhood, as one devoted to

her, heart and soul, I was originally tempted to connive in an imposture, the results of which you may read in the premature blanching of my hair and wasting of my form. But now, Henry, now that I see you on the eve of entering into life, and consummating the evil of which we laid the foundations, by assuming in public life the rank and station to which you are so little entitled, and becoming in your turn, a husband and a father,—thus also entailing on an innocent family the stain of illegitimacy—my conscience rebukes me beyond what I am able to bear. For the last month have I determined to lessen my own responsibility by sharing with yourself the burthen of this hateful secret !”

The young man shuddered, and turned away; for already, he felt fully conscious of the weight transferred to his heart. Yet he dared not upbraid the man before him. The first impulse of his generous nature had been, on the contrary, to revile Sir James De Lisle for

having so long permitted him to usurp a name and fortune, to which he ought to have remained at a fearful distance ; and after so short a space, to recede from these honest intentions into a regret that he should have been roused even now from his pleasurable dream, would have afforded too sad an evidence of the weakness of human nature.

Yet, in the secrecy and solitude of his chamber, it was thus alas ! he argued with himself.

“ Next to the cruelty of keeping me so long in error,” mused he, during the first sleepless night at Holme Court which succeeded the revelations of his kinsman,—“ next to suffering me to imbibe habits of luxury, enlightenment, taste, refinement, — how little alas, adapted to the sphere of ignominious poverty into which I am about to be precipitated,—is the callous selfishness of at length relieving his own overcharged conscience, by flinging upon mine the burthen of this hateful mystery.

I almost fancied that, amid his pretended regrets and self-reviling, I could discern in those wondrous eyes of his a latent expression of joy at the agony he was inflicting! He watched me,—great God! how he watched me,—as he proceeded in that terrible narrative; *my* whole interest in which arose, Heaven knows, from a mere impulse of humanity. How composedly he sat reclining in his chair, to note the first frantic outburst of my incredulity; and in the sequel, the depth of my despair!—I scarcely know how I refrained from rushing upon him, when he first took courage to tell me to my face, that I was a beggar's brat—a changeling—illegitimate! I—I, the heir of the house of Arlingham.—I—Lord Fareham, the affianced—the beloved of the noble Evelyn Lorn!—Yes—yes!—here, alone as I am, let me for the last time record those blessed distinctions;—for the last time revel in the delight of being rich, great, honourable, beloved, respected! Time enough for the terrible reverse!—Time—

always time enough to be reviled, and spat upon by the vile ;—nay, perhaps renounced and rejected by those in whose affection I still presume to put my trust.”

Then flinging himself on the sofa of his dressing-room, the young man covered his face with his hands, and wept bitterly.

The livelong night did he pass in these buffettings of spirit: the livelong night did he abandon himself to his despair; yet not without oftentimes misdoubting the reality of the impressions conveyed to him, and rebuking himself for having, even for a moment, given credit to either the ravings of a madman, or the sorry jest of a fool.

Still, the perfect gravity and sobriety with which De Lisle had delivered himself,—the plausibility of the train of circumstantial evidence he had brought together,—rendered perseverance in incredulity impossible. He was forced to believe: and believing, to abhor his abject self, and the world with which it was henceforward to be connected.

"To meet this man at breakfast with the feelings now rankling in my mind, would be impossible!" was his concluding reflection, as the first faint streaks of morning became perceptible through the window, which the oppression of his frame, even at that chilly season of the year, had compelled him to open. "I could not do it! I should say something hateful. I cannot at present answer either for my words or actions. Yet were I to disturb the house at this untimely hour by ringing to order posthorses, his servants would apprise him; and I should be having him offer to accompany me back to town!—Worse, a thousand times worse than remaining here! Till I have made up my mind what steps to take, I will neither be alone with De Lisle, nor look again upon my father's face.—*My father?*—Alas! have I still the courage to name that loving friend—*my father!*"

And again, tears flowed helplessly from his eyes.

At length, in the perplexity of his distracting

thoughts, he determined to leave the house as if for an early morning walk, and repair to the adjoining town of Woolsthorpe, through which conveyances to town were passing at every hour of the day, leaving on his table a letter of explanation to Sir James, desiring that his servant and carriage might proceed to Fareham Castle, to await his further orders.

While occupied with the execution of his project, the young man experienced all the humiliation arising from the consciousness of an unworthy action. He felt that he ought to have retained sufficient self-possession to encounter Sir James De Lisle with an unflinching countenance. For he had done nothing to be ashamed of. Whoever else might be guilty in the affair, he, at present, was blameless ; and to skulk away from the roof of his entertainer, was an act of weakness for which he despised himself.

Still, his courage did not enable him to confront a renewal of the scene and conversation of the preceding night ; and he accordingly de-

scended the gloomy oaken staircase of the ancient mansion, where, at that untimely hour, scarcely a servant was stirring; unbarred with his own hand the ponderous hall door of Holme Court, and having closed it noiselessly behind him, hurried into the Park.

The sun of a hazy winter morning was making a supercilious attempt to shine on the cheerful landscape, as though it considered those leafless woods and dingy pastures scarcely worthy of the effort. The deer were huddled discontentedly together, getting through the dead season with apparently as much ennui as their betters; yet so relieved did Lord Fareham feel by the certainty of having escaped from all immediate probing of his wound, that the dreary scene looked bright and consolatory; and by the time he attained the high-road, he was almost in spirits.—To have disappointed and baffled his tormentor, was something!

“When he comes down to breakfast, and bending those icy grey eyes of his upon my

vacant place, discovers that I have broken my chains, and am gone to brood over my miseries where at least my resolutions will be unshackled by his arbitrary influence, he will be furious!" mused the young man; when, having taken a seat in the first coach that presented itself, he found himself bowling along his way to town,—so little regardless of the inconvenience of being fifth passenger in a crowded public vehicle, that his grumbling companions had little reason to imagine the intruder was accustomed to any more exclusive mode of conveyance.

By degrees, fresh air and rapid motion produced their usual effect upon his frame. And if no longer the joyous, triumphant, being who had traversed that self-same road in his travelling chariot the preceding day,—believing himself to be the happiest of sons and lovers, heir to a colossal fortune, and an ancient earldom,—he had sufficiently recovered his self-confidence to feel that, even if deprived of all these means and appliances of happiness, even

if condemned to an ignominious position in life, the high-minded man who had so long cherished him as a son, could not at once withdraw his affections: while, as to Evelyn, his own dear Evelyn—but no! of her it was as yet impossible to think without a renewal of the agonising tremours of his heart.

Lord Fareham had received a first-rate education. All that Eton, Oxford and continental travel under the care of an excellent private tutor, could do to render him worthy the name it was his fortune to bear, had been effected; and more than once, when receiving the compliments of the college dons so apt to espy genius in the eldest son of an Earl possessing church and ministerial patronage, he had been told with a smile, that “it was a pity he had not his own way to make in the world.” As yet inexperienced in the servility of mankind, it was natural enough that, at such a moment as the present, he should recur to these assurances with feelings of pride and consolation.

"At least, this dreadful blow will not find me wholly helpless!" argued he. "If I have my bread to earn, I trust I am not wholly without the means of earning it; and if Evelyn will only deign to share the bread thus earned, far greater would be my happiness in her love, than in the utmost pomp of Fareham Castle or Berkeley Square. Well, well! all, perhaps, is not for the worst! There may be comfort in store for me, which not even the officious malice of a Sir James De Lisle has power to embitter."

As he approached the metropolis, however, new embarrassments presented themselves. His first idea had been, to take refuge in an hotel. But he had quitted Holme Court without any other effects than the clothes he wore, and the purse in his pocket; and shrank from the prospect of the mistrust and curiosity which so strange a state of things must occasion among strangers.—Better return to Berkeley Square, which he had quitted only the preceding day, after spend-

ing a week in town on his way from Brighton to Fareham Castle ; where he was at least sure of a change of clothes.

Scarcely, however, had he exposed himself to the ejaculations of the old porter and house-keeper, always left in charge of the family mansion, when he began to repent his precipitancy. Voullies of anxious questions, regarding himself, his father, his carriage, and his valet (but the two last, first, in due order of precedence) reminded him, that as a man of his rank had no right to be sick, or sorry, or capricious, without the consent of his servants ; for in their anxiety lest he should have been overturned, robbed, or otherwise incommoded, his faithful menials contrived to render his return home almost as disagreeable as though some painful accident had indeed befallen him. Lord Fareham was obliged to signify, with far less than his usual courtesy, the desire to be left alone, to be denied to visitors, and unintruded on by themselves, ere he could command the

solitude so essential for the recomposure of his bewildered mind.

Still, the old housekeeper, who had lived in that house so many years as to feel a sort of proprietorship in the place, persisted in doing the honours. Her master, the Earl, who occupied a high ministerial appointment, rarely quitted London, except, as at the present time, during the holidays. And she chose to make Lord Fareham the confidante of her recent efforts in his service, in having carpets taken up and chimneys swept, previous to the return of the family from the Castle. When he ordered a simple dinner prepared in the study, Mrs. Smith's fussy apologies for the disorder of the place were, in short, so vexatious, and her intrusions in order to make him more comfortable so inconvenient, that he peevishly issued counter orders, and determined to dine at his club.—He was beginning to perceive that solitude is easier to be found in a crowd, than in a well-ordered home.

On reaching White's, however, the room was full ; that is, it contained the eight or ten idle men of his acquaintance, at all times to be found on the *pavé* of London ; dreading whose exclamations of wonder at seeing him return so soon from Fareham Castle, where, two days before, he had announced his intention of spending the remainder of the holidays, he extricated himself as speedily as he could, hurried to the Clarendon, and having secured a private room, sat down, in lonely sullenness, for the enjoyment of his miseries.

Some people are better able to confront their griefs in solitude ; some, while supported by the stir and bustle of the world. Or more properly, perhaps, the griefs of our own creation, the griefs embittered by remorse, are harder to be borne if alone with our self-accusations ; while those which have fallen undeservedly on our heads, become aggravated by the tumults and even sympathy of society. It is urgent to meet misfortune face to face, that we may take

a just estimate of its proportions, and diminish its magnitude by the exercise of our own philosophy.

But there was nothing, not a single point, shade, or phase in the distress of Lord Fareham, which could obtain alleviation on a closer and more deliberate survey. Compelled to resign the ties and affections which had so enhanced the prosperities of his social position, the new connexions about to substitute themselves for these lost treasures, were of a nature to fill him with dismay. Had he been only the child of poor and honest parents,—parents whom he might have cherished and respected!—But in addition to misery, grossness, and ignorance, he had vice and shame to apprehend. He was the offspring of crime. He had been found where, but for the cruel interference of Sir James, he would have grown to manhood,—at the door of a gin-shop, hushed by execrations, soothed by a blow!

And to such entreatment, and such relation-

ship, was he about to return. Into such a pit of infamy, was he about to sink. Cut off from the dearer ties of life, reduced to a level below that of even the lowest of those he had considered his menials, for a moment he clenched his hands in anguish of spirit; and as they lay before him on the table beside which he was seated, he could not forbear asking himself whether they indeed constituted a portion of the self-same man who, a few months before, had estimated himself so highly?—For he was now beginning to loathe his very being. But for the restraining principle,—the hope and dread which constitute the basis of religion,—he would probably have rushed from the strife of his wounded soul into the fearful quietude of the grave.

The officious attentions of the waiter recalled him to himself; and he was vexed to find himself *surprised* at the fellow's persevering obsequiousness. So thoroughly had he been absorbed in the contemplation of his terrible situa-

tion and the indignities to which it was likely to expose him, that already he was touched by expressions of a deference, to which he felt himself unintitled.

As the dinner he had ordered stood untouched before him, the waiter was eager in offering to bring other dishes more to his Lordship's taste.

"Would his Lordship choose fish? Game? Would his Lordship try a devilled fowl, or broiled bone?"

The man evidently conceived that the dispirited air of one he had hitherto seen so joyous, was the result of intemperance over night, or losses at play;—a common cause of low spirits among the young men for whom he was in the habit of catering.

Still, Lord Fareham's replies were most unsatisfactorily negative; and having simply signified his desire to be left alone, he was about to return to his uneasy contemplations, when the man, whose curiosity and sympathy were excited by a mood of mind which not even

coquilles de volaille à la financière and a bottle of Léoville were able to stimulate, re-opened the door to announce, with a joyful countenance, that Mr. Harbottle Driftington was in the coffee-room, and desirous of seeing his Lordship.

Lord Fareham half rose from his seat, and was about to throw down his napkin and attempt an escape from the house, so odious to him at that moment was intrusion of any kind ; but most of all, the intrusion of a man like Driftington,—a creature of the clubs and coteries, whose existence consisted in hearing and repeating ; hearing, in order that he might repeat again,—repeating, in order that more might be told him. But before he could execute more than the first movement, Driftington, who had followed close upon the heels of the waiter, was in the room.

“ My dear Fareham, how are you ? ”—cried he, unceremoniously sitting down. “ I could not believe my ears, when assured you were here

again. You were one of those for whom I inquired this morning, on arriving from Ireland; and every body told me you had started yesterday for De Lisle's, and that your father had got all the world and his wife at Fareham Castle, whom you were on your way to join."

"I *was* on my way. But recollecting some business I had neglected in London, I retraced my steps."

"Business, eh?—Some fellow you had forgotten to call out?—or some girl to whom you had forgotten to propose?—or some bill you had forgotten to pay?—or, perhaps, only some man you had forgotten to ask to dinner? Do you remember Bob Presto, returning from Calais to Paris, on the spur of a similar qualm of conscience?"—

"As I am dining alone, *par préférence* and for the sake of quiet, you are answered on the latter question. The others are such as a man never ventures to ask with the expectation of receiving an answer."

"Crusty, eh?—Then I suspect I have hit home! But no matter! you are here, and that's enough. Monstrously glad I am to see you; for I was amazingly disappointed this morning, when I heard that you had left town."

"Have you anything to say to me then?" demanded Lord Fareham, whose nervous susceptibility was already beginning to be alarmed by the announcement of any person having 'particular business' with him.

"A thousand things, my dear fellow!"

The young man was relieved. In the world, "a thousand things" constitute the synonym of "nothing."

"In the first place, I wanted to congratulate you—"

"Thanks!" was the succinct reply of Lord Fareham, who was not one of those who evince their respect for the woman of their choice, by denying their engagement even at the foot of the altar.—"At present, there is nothing settled to call for your congratulations."

"Pardon me, pardon me, pardon me!"—cried Driftington, who had already approached his chair to the table, on which the claret and oranges remained, with the evident intention of prolonging his stay; "all is *completely* settled! I had it from Lord Tarleton, who is married you know, to a cousin of the Duke's."

"But who is no way connected, that I am aware of, with either the Lorn family, or—or my own!" added Lord Fareham in a lower voice, still believing that his companion alluded to his intended alliance.

"I can promise you," returned Driftington, in a more confidential tone, "that the Duke is as safe as if you had him in your hat! While the opposition are crowing in the expectation of a majority of twenty-six, your father, to whom we are already so deeply indebted, has secured a most unexpected accession of strength in this coalition. Nay, don't deny it! Unless *his* doing, who on earth could have brought over the most mulish and pig-headed of mankind?—And as I

said before, you have him in your hat ! Such a coalition never strengthened a government!—Thirty-four votes ! Conceive, I entreat you, conceive what a *coup-de-main* !—What a triumphant majority to meet parliament at the commencement of such a session as we have before us !—My dear Fareham, you must again allow me to congratulate you.”

“At present, I have taken so small a share in politics,” replied Lord Fareham, in a listless though harassed manner, “that I fear I cannot screw myself up to the pitch of enthusiasm you seem to require.”

“But, my dear fellow, you cannot be blind to the fact that, but for this accession of strength, the ministry could not have stood a month ! The Irish question must have crushed them. I promise you that in Dublin, it was scarcely expected they would have courage to face parliament at all. However, as I said before, thanks to your father, we have it hollow !—Snug for the session—snug for half-a-dozen sessions!—

In fact, I see no chance of our being out for the next twenty years."

"Let me congratulate *you*, then, instead of accepting your congratulations," observed Lord Fareham, "for I am aware of the value you attach to all this. If the Duke of Hythe have come over, a great point has certainly been obtained. But I am not the more convinced that—that *my father* has any share in his conversion."

"Close, eh? The surer sign that it *is* his doing and that you are in the secrets of the prison-house! Keep them, my dear boy, keep them and welcome. All I care for is the result!—All that touches me, is the result!—A majority of fifty-two!—By Jove, it is too glorious!"

Lord Fareham's symptoms of impatience were now unmistakable : but Driftington, both in and out of the house, was accustomed to confront symptoms of impatience with unconcern ; and accordingly proceeded to unfold to his irritated companion with the utmost sang-froid, the most

secret details of a political intrigue, which, had it really existed, would have been kept concealed from public participation with the most cautious reserve.

"Perhaps," cried Driftington, suddenly interrupting himself, on perceiving that not a syllable could be extracted in reply,—"perhaps you have cut the big wigs at Fareham, at such a crisis, and are going down to Welworths?—Quite right, my dear fellow, I perfectly agree with you! Nothing so great a bore as the company of a set of men at the moment they have such a prodigious roc's egg to cackle over! Nothing else talked of—nothing else thought of!—I quite agree with you, that Fareham Castle must be the deuce of a bore this Christmas. And so you are going down to Welworths?—Well, if I had guessed as much, I would have made my arrangements to go there too. I was there last year, and thought the thing decidedly bad. Jephson has such a villainous set of people about him. Amusing enough, certainly; but one makes

awkward acquaintances at Welworths, and they stick to one afterwards. However, had I known you were to be of the party this year, I would have waived my objections, and contrived to manage it."

"But what makes you for a moment suppose I am going to Welworths?"

"Because every third person I met this morning, said he was going there.—All the loose people I found on the *pavé*, were engaged to Jephson.—There is to be an immense party."

"You did not find *me* loose on the *pavé*," replied Lord Fareham. "I hate immense parties, and never was at Welworths in my life.—I have only a bowing acquaintance with Sir John Jephson."

"And enough too, I promise you!—His house is a perfect menagerie. The broken-down lions, who cannot find a den elsewhere, are sure to be heard of in his set. Yes! Welworths is a house of call for broken-down

lions!—A capital name, eh?—Abominable of you to give it, though; you, who say you have only a distant bowing acquaintance with Sir John!”—

“ Does it require to be a man’s bosom friend, to say something of him peculiarly bitter?”—replied Lord Fareham, shrugging his shoulders.

“ My dear fellow, you never saw such a set of people as we had last year!” cried Driftington, unheeding. “ All the regular diners out and monkey men collected together, as the pickpockets are at Botany Bay, with nobody’s pocket to pick. All actors—no audience; and you may suppose that they would have sooner expired than laugh at each other’s jokes. It was really terrible to hear the dead silence that succeeded every pun! However, there’ll be laughing enough, I’ll answer for it, at Fareham Castle, under the existing circumstances; so I strongly advise you to invite your man to dinner in all speed, or shoot him,

and have done with it, and return to your lares and penates."

At any other moment, Lord Fareham might have been tempted to observe to the intruder that, in these times, people seem disposed to dispense with invitations. But his mind was too much preoccupied for pleasantry,—his spirits too much depressed for retort.

"I am passing through town on my way to Queen's Clere," resumed Driftington, as if in reply to an inquiry which his companion showed little disposition to make. "Pleasant house enough ;—though I'm sure I don't know why Lady Hester goes on inviting me ; except, indeed, as the bosom friend of those who are better matches than myself. Ah, my dear Fareham !—I am afraid you were a sad rogue in that quarter!"

"I have not the honour of understanding you?" said the young man, almost out of patience.

"You don't pretend ignorance that poor Frances Hope is dying in love with you?—"

" Most complete ; and if I thought you had the slightest grounds for half your random assertions, might think it necessary to add, that no attentions of mine ever gave the shadow of foundation for such an inference."

" Come, come, come !—When you danced with her at half the balls last season ?"

" Among fifty other partners of her own and mine."

" Well then, I have seen you take her to the carriage at the opera a thousand times."

" Five at the utmost ; and when expressly asked to do so by Lady Hester."

" Well ! I shall certainly tell them that I saw you on my way through town ; though not altogether so radiant with your double triumph,—private and public,—as I expected."

" You would really oblige me by finding some better topic of conversation at Queen's Clere, than my looks or prospects !" said Lord Fareham, peevishly.

" Why, you don't mean to insinuate, my

dear fellow, that anything is *amiss* with your prospects ?” persisted Driftington. “ I am aware that the Clantullin family are deuced sharp, knowing, *canny* folks ! I was always afraid you might have some difficulty in dealing with them, when it came to the point ! Settlements too stiff, eh ?—Gad ! I thought so, the moment I saw you !—However, your father *might* stretch a point just now that his affairs, and the nation’s are getting on at the rate of fifty knots an hour !”—

Lord Fareham had some difficulty in maintaining his *sang-froid* under these persevering attacks. He knew, however, that it was not safe to leave such a man as Driftington astride upon a false impression. Within four and twenty hours, the clubs would be ringing with the story of the rapacity of the Earl of Clantullin, or the shabbiness of the Earl of Arlingham.

“ In one word, Driftington,” said he, “ I have had no misunderstanding with Lady Evelyn Lorn, or her family. There has been,

as yet, no question of settlements between us;—nor do I see why the simple circumstance of eating a cutlet at the Clarendon, entitles you to invent romances on my account.—I must really beg you to exercise your skill in behalf of some more deserving person.—And now, good night!—I am about to pay my bill, and be off.”

“ My dear fellow, I will walk home with you,—my way lies past your door,” cried Mr. Harbottle Driftington, not the least abashed.

“ I am not going home.”

“ To the play then, of course; for there is not a soul in town, or a single house open! —I’ll go with you and welcome!—One never has time for the theatres during the season,—or more properly, the session.”

“ I am not going to the theatre. I have a private engagement, and must wish you good night.”

“ A private engagement, eh?—*I* understand! —Fie, fie, fie, Fareham! With so pretty a bride in the case as Lady Evelyn, I *really* think!—However, you may rely upon me. Not a word

of it at Queen's Clere, I promise you ;—though it would probably afford some little consolation to poor Frances Hope, to learn what sort of a Benedict she might have found in you."

Driftington was still talking, when Lord Fareham, having hurried past him, was already in the street; rightly conjecturing that, in the course of the evening, more than one of the clubs would be diverted by a sketch of his sulky solitary dinner at the Clarendon; with supplementary hints that he had been either turned out of doors by his father, or rejected by Lady Evelyn Lorn.

It was not till he regained the "home no more his own," and, having thrown himself into an arm-chair, opposite a blazing fire in his dressing-room, reflected that he had the whole wakeful night before him for unmolested consideration, that he could recover the petty irritation of having been thus gratuitously intruded upon. It was evident that Driftington knew

the real value of his company, by the recklessness with which he threw it away !

Scarcely, however, had Lord Farcham composed himself for the remainder of the evening, when he was startled by a knock at the house door.—A knock, at that hour—at that season of the year!—What could it mean?

Before he had time to summon the porter to receive his orders of exclusion, he heard the steps of poor old Mrs. Smith stealing towards his door.

“ Mr. Harbottle Driftington’s compliments, Sir, and he have brought back the pocket-book you left on the table at the Clarendon Hotel, when you paid your bill.—He would not have disturbed you to-night, Sir, but he thought, perhaps, you might feel uneasy on discovering that you had lost it.”

Lord Fareham felt far more uneasy, however, when, being restored to his hands, he discovered that it contained a few mysterious lines of adjuration, addressed to him by Sir James De Lisle after their separation the pre-

ceding night. Though almost ashamed of himself for the supposition that a clasped pocket-book could not safely pass through the hands of a man calling himself a gentleman, a man of education and standing in society, the prying and gossiping propensities of Driftington were too notorious not to provoke suspicion. Moreover, the unusual circumstance of his having left the pocket-book with the servants, without an attempt at further intrusion, looked sufficiently like consciousness ; and, at all events, the discovery that the alleged “ private engagement ” of Lord Fareham, was a mere pretext to get rid of his company, was not likely to liberalize his opinions or soften his reports concerning the unaccountable abruptness of his return to town.

Among the besetting miseries of Lord Fareham’s position, however, these vexations were not likely to be long dwelt upon !—He had still to struggle against the billows of “ a sea of troubles !”—

CHAPTER III.

Each substance of a grief hath twenty shadows,
Which show like grief itself, but are not so.
For sorrow's eyes, glazed with blinding tears,
Divide one thing entire to many objects.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE late Countess of Arlingham, the hitherto supposed mother of Lord Fareham, was the orphan niece and ward of Sir Andrew De Lisle; by whom she had been so tenderly reared and educated, that most people concluded he intended his portionless kinswoman to become the wife of his son.

Such, however, were not his views; and on discovering, as the cousins advanced towards maturity, that the beauty of Selina De Lisle was making a stronger impression than he desired on the mind of the young man, the heir of

Holme Court, instead of being placed in the Guards according to the original intentions of his family, was despatched to the continent with a private tutor, with strict instructions as regarded the interception of his English correspondence.

It surprised Sir Andrew, indeed, to perceive how little the young lover appeared to resent this peremptory disposal of his destinies ; not surmising that he quitted England without anxiety or alarm, through perfect confidence in the affections of his cousin. For Selina had promised — Selina had pledged herself ! — So soon as she had attained her majority, and independence of the guardianship of her uncle, she was to become the wife of him, who, though only two years older than herself, had obtained unlimited influence over her mind.

James De Lisle did not reflect that characters thus easily subjected to the ascendancy of others, are open to new impressions and new influences ; and that, during his absence, his

father might unduly work upon the plastic dispositions of his cousin.—When, therefore, rendered anxious by her prolonged silence, he hurried back to England at the close of a year's absence, and arrived at Holme Court three days after her union with the Earl of Arlingham, he was as much startled and as thoroughly overwhelmed, as if the world contained no antecedent example of female inconstancy !

It was in vain his father represented to him that their affection had been a mere boy-and-girlish attachment, unworthy to stand the test of absence. It was in vain Sir Andrew represented that, had his niece persisted in encouraging her cousin to rebellion, he would have cut off his son with a shilling, rather than authorise a marriage which warred against all his feelings and principles ;—a marriage between first cousins,—fatal to the prospects of a family in every point of view ;—the unhappy young man would listen to no arguments,

—to no consolations. The superiority of the bridegroom in rank and mental qualifications was but an aggravation of his mortification.

—He was not only deserted, but felt that a man, deserving the distinction, had been preferred to himself.—The Earl, who was one of the handsomest and most rising young men of the day, had evidently supplanted him in the affections he had believed so fondly and firmly his own!—It was consequently upon Selina, and not upon his father, he visited the frustration of his hopes.

And how?—for those who witnessed their first meeting, some months after the brilliant alliance formed by Miss De Lisle, had certainly no reason to infer that the fervent congratulations of her cousin were otherwise than sincere.—It was in London they met;—amid the crush and hurry of the season; and Selina, who, almost from the period of her cousin's departure from England, had been induced by his apparent neglect and the misrepresenta-

tions of his father of the dissolute life he was leading on the continent, to believe herself utterly forgotten, was now too happy in the destinies which providence had assigned her, to take much heed of the variations of his countenance, or ponder over the exaggeration of his expressions of joy.

As the adored wife of a man of superior merit,—an adored wife with the prospect of soon becoming a happy mother,—it was easy to behold in James De Lisle only an affectionate kinsman; whose friendship was not likely to be shaken by those vices and volatilities, which had fortunately prevented their union ere it was too late for her happiness. It did not for a moment occur to her that the man, who had forgotten and renounced her the moment she was out of sight, could still regard her with more than kinsmanly affection.

Though unaware of the train of deceptions which had led to this state of feeling, it was

precisely thus that James Delisle desired to find the woman, by whom he felt himself so deeply injured ;—the woman on whom he had already sworn to be as deeply revenged. He wished him to be self-reliant, unobservant, uninquiring. He wished to become her confidential friend. No surer vantage ground, for one who purposes to become a deadly enemy !

But the post thus coveted and speedily attained, proved to be one of torment to himself. The young wife had nothing to confide but her grateful affection for the man who had chosen her, poor and untitled, to be the queen of his happy home, and partner of his public distinctions ; and the loathing lover had scarcely patience with the humility of her devotion to his rival.—Whenever they met, he had to listen to her aspirings after greater excellence and higher accomplishments, in order to become more worthy the name she bore.—Then came her anxiety that the child about to be born to the Earl, should be a son—*an heir* ;—that

he should resemble his father in mental distinctions and firmness of character.—Yes!—so thoroughly had she forgotten, that the reserved and apathetic Mr. De Lisle, who lounged by her side, had ever been the dear cousin James who loved her better than his life, that she actually ventured to talk to *him* of the future Lord Fareham who was to walk in the steps of the Earl of Arlingham! No passing over that!—Such utter want of sympathy and perception was past forgiveness!—

As the period approached for the consummation of the happiness of the woman thus loved and hated, the struggle of passion, in the breast of De Lisle, became indeed terrible. The Countess was sufficiently young and delicate for her friends to be solicitous on her account; and as she now seldom appeared in society, he had a fair pretext for frequent visits to her house. Often, after spending an hour by her side, detecting in her words, looks, and occupations, a thousand unavowed references to the

expected treasure which was to perfect her household happiness, he felt as if he could exterminate both it and her; and if the Earl, in the peaceful serenity of domestic love had entered the room at that moment, some deadly insult and deadly conflict might possibly have been the result.

But with the cold dew rising on his forehead, and the execrations stifled in his breast, he forbore; forbore, because contemplating a further-sighted and colder-blooded revenge. It was fortunate, perhaps, that no accidental interference revealed to him, in this excited state of feeling, the share taken by his father in all that had occurred; for it required stronger principles of self-restraint than existed in the soul of De Lisle, to modify his desire of vengeance.

The little victim, on whom he had anchored his hopes of retribution, was fated to escape him.—The child was born dead! Another, which succeeded the following year to its in-

heritance of hatred, survived only a day. And as the repinings of the young Countess were duly confided to him,—to him alone, as her nearest kinsman and earliest companion,—the feelings which might otherwise have languished into tameness, were preserved in all their intensity. Nay, with the perversity of an evil mind, his passion for the adoring wife of the Earl of Arlingham, appeared to grow with the years which would have probably obliterated all charm in poor Selina, had she become the partner of his life.

Never had she appeared to him so beautiful as when, weeping over the coffin which contained the third living infant wrested from her affections; which, having survived the epoch fatal to its predecessors, she had put the full warmth of her loving heart into her hopes of rearing to manhood. It happened that Sir Andrew De Lisle and his son were her guests at Fareham Castle at the moment of the sudden illness which deprived her of this last and

dearest treasure ; and as the Earl had been sent for express to Windsor for the discharge of his public duties, it was but natural that the counsels and attentions of her cousin should acquire new value in the sight of the afflicted woman. Sir Andrew was now old, infirm, indifferent. But his son appeared to enter into her feelings, as she poured forth her simple lamentations over the body of her child.

A better man would have been touched by the self-deprecation with which, even in the bitterest of her grief, poor Lady Arlingham admitted that, if permitted by the Almighty to retain a living child as the heir to its father's virtues, her happiness would be too great for mortal desert ; and as she proceeded to point out to the seemingly sympathising friend the trace in that little marble face of the features dearest to her on earth, it seemed as though some fiend were instigating her to stir up the embers of wrath which her tears might otherwise have quenched for evermore.

The following summer, Selina was again about to become a mother; and the letters which announced to her cousin that she was fuller than ever of hope and courage, strengthened in health by time and the vigilant tenderness of those around her, reached him as he was attending the death-bed of his father. The old man's agony was a prolonged one; and the little Lord Fareham was older than any previous child of Selina's, before the kinsman, who had now attained the enjoyment of his family honours and estates, opposed his broad-hemmed weepers to its laced robing.

“ Is he not a noble little fellow ? ” cried the proud and happy mother, as she exhibited him to Sir James De Lisle. “ If my poor dear uncle had only lived to see and bless him ;—my uncle, who was to me so good and steady a friend ! Dearest cousin, it is to you I must now look for a continuance of that family affection, —the only blessing I enjoy, which is not derived from the best of husbands ! ”

On that hint, the benediction which had spontaneously risen to the lips of Sir James De Lisle at sight of the innocent beauty of the noble boy, was converted into a cleaving curse!—

Such was the connexion between the parties interwoven by Sir James into the extraordinary narrative which had recently startled the mind of Lord Fareham. To the son of Selina, indeed, he had avowed nothing of the early engagement subsisting between them; all he admitted, as regarded the Countess of Arlingham, being the tie of consanguinity, heightened by the warmest feelings of kinsmanly attachment.

“I loved her as the dearest of sisters!” was his expression, in describing to her son the worldly position of the Countess; “and on my return to England, it was to me, as to a valued brother, she confided the bitterness of her mortification at remaining childless. The affection entertained for her by your father, she said, did not prevent him from letting her per-

ceive how grievously he was disappointed at the idea of his family honours becoming extinct—and his family estates descending to his worthless cousin, Sir George Strickland ; while as to the Countess-Dowager, my poor cousin scarcely ventured to admit the tauntings and humiliations she had to endure at her hands ! The death of her children,—so cruel a bereavement to her young heart,—was made a matter of reproach to her : for those she loved as the babes of her bosom, were to her husband's family only the heirs of its honours.

“ When, therefore, my dear Fareham, I saw poor Selina’s health failing, and her spirit sinking under the influence of renewed disappointment and perpetual reproach, I conceived a desperate project. The last babe of Lady Arlingham, though so fair and promising in its early infancy, soon exhibited the symptoms of fatal disorganization which had carried off its predecessors. Already, it was beginning to sicken ; and in the wasted form, and despair-

ing face of my afflicted cousin, I beheld indications of the loss of both, when accident made me a spectator of the scene I have already described to you;—a scene which, would to heaven I could expunge from my mind for evermore!—

“The contrast between that lovely infant—starved, beaten, persecuted, abhorred,—and the poor perishing babe of the Countess, suggested a fatal expedient to my mind.

“For it was I, dear Henry, who, from first to last, was solely and only to blame. The project was mine—the fulfilment mine. The crime—therefore, the crime be on my head!”—

“While the atonement rests wholly on my own!” was the murmured interruption of Lord Fareham. But of the ejaculation forced out of the depths of his heart, his kinsman took no heed.

“The venerable nurse, by whom Selina and myself had been reared, still presided in her

establishment," said De Lisle; "and the old lady entertained an idea, and had communicated the impression to myself, that the system pursued by your mother's medical attendants towards her children, was the cause of all the mischief. If the babes who had successively perished at Fareham Castle, could have been born and reared in some humble healthy cottage, she was persuaded that they would have lived and prospered. When, therefore, the physicians announced that the last-born of the predestined race exhibited the same fatal symptoms as the rest, the faithful old creature, so attached to your poor mother, and so long an eye-witness of her trials, was readily persuaded by me to substitute for the sick infant one whom I announced as the healthy child of one of my tenants, under whose care the little Lord Fareham was likely to be perfectly restored; on my undertaking to accept, in the sequel, the blame of so bold an attempt, and reveal the secret to her lord and lady on bringing back

to them, at some future period, the convalescent treasure of their house.

“ Assisted by her ministry and counsel, the change was less difficult to be effected than you might suppose. The strong opiate administered to the miserable outcast I had rescued from its unnatural parents, reduced it for a time to a state almost resembling the weakness of the dying babe of the Earl and Countess—”

“ But that a mother’s eyes could be so deceived ! ” exclaimed Lord Fareham. “ No ! that woman could not have really loved her infant, or she would instantly have detected the deception practised on her ! The physicians, the father, might be blinded ; but a vigilant, tender, eagle-eyed, nursing mother — oh ! never, — never ! ”

“ She *was* deceived ! Even *I* had been anxious and doubtful on this score ; and never shall *I* forget the agitation with which *I* beheld her press for the first time to her poor heart, the

little alien we had imposed upon her. But she was too thankful to Heaven for a change in its appearance which she attributed to a favourable turn in its disorder, to be very observant. The eyes of the fond mother were too full of tears of gratitude, to see clearly.

“The old nurse, meanwhile, found all her scruples quieted by the perfect success of our project. While the physicians earned the goodwill of the happy parents by the gradual convalescence, as it appeared, of their infant heir, I constantly brought her assurances, my dear Henry, of the corresponding improvement of her nursling. A very few weeks, I assured her, would suffice to place it on a par with its representative, and enable me to explain all to the Earl and Countess. But, alas ! for my veracity ! within two days of its removal, it had fulfilled the predictions of the physicians, and given up the ghost !”—

“Thank Heaven I have not been the means of keeping a living child in estrangement from

the affection of its parents!"—exclaimed Lord Fareham, fervently.

"Very different, however, were my own emotions on seeing its little wasted limbs consigned to the grave! My attachment to Selina had deadened my sense of all that was wrong in my act of imposition, till the excitement of success was at an end. But when I saw that it was no longer in my power to make restitution, my heart sank within me. If forced to an avowal of the truth, how could I satisfy the anxious heart of my gentle cousin that her babe had been properly tended? Even if I succeeded in softening her indignation and that of her husband, how was I henceforward to secure her against the cruelties to which, when childless, she had been formerly exposed? At all events I determined to prolong my period for consideration. No need to confide to the venerable partner of my fault, the infructuousness of our hopes of the infant's recovery. It was something to see Selina so happy while caressing the healthy babe

who smiled in her arms, while receiving the grateful courtesies of the family it was destined to represent.

“I can scarcely describe to you, however, my apprehension, lest, in some moment of weakness, arising from senility, the old nurse should be prematurely tempted to reveal the truth; and never did I approach my cousin’s house, without misgivings of what might greet me on the threshold!

“But this source of anxiety, was not of long continuance. The faithful servant of our family was suddenly carried off; and though after her apoplectic seizure she made several earnest attempts to address her beloved lady, her words were fortunately too inarticulate to betray me.

“I had now, my dear Henry, nothing further to dread from disclosure: all that remained to be done, depended solely on myself.”

While listening with growing conviction, to these terrible details, the mind of Lord Fareham

had been vainly labouring after sufficient compo-
sure to demand from Sir James De Lisle, no
longer his kinsman—no longer his friend—yet,
the sole arbiter of his destinies,—some account
of the intervening stage of his existence between
starvation at a gin-shop door, and the pampered
ease of the heir of an opulent earldom. He
wanted to ask—at his age, how terrible an
inquiry!—*who* were his parents.

“I should not have been thus slow to inform
you,” was the reply of his companion, “had my
intelligence any thing consolatory in store for
your feelings. But this, my dear Henry, is the
worst feature of the case. In bestowing charity
on the wretched old woman, thrown as it would
appear by the powers of mischief as a temptation
across my path, I had taken her address, with
the view of despatching one of my servants to
her habitation, and at some future time rendering
her further assistance. But when, in listening to
the lamentations of my old nurse over the cradle
of her noble nursling, there unhappily occurred

to my remembrance the bright eyes of the little victim I had beheld wrestling against privation and cruelty, I resolved to visit her myself.

“I went, Henry ! Spare me the recital of all I witnessed that is loathsome in vice and misery. The squalor of that wretched room was such as I had not before supposed to exist in the civilised world. To obtain possession of the infant, there scarcely needed the bribe I offered ; and I verily believe those infamous people would have surrendered it to the first-comer, certain not to return it at some future time on their hands. The old woman had some pretext for regarding it as a burthen. For the child proved to be the offspring of an abandoned granddaughter by a married man ; and the girl, instead of choosing to work for its maintenance, seemed to forget its existence amid the troubled courses of her vicious career. In short, my dear boy, I obtained you for my own without a scruple or a pang on the part of your nearest relatives !”—

"And did you never afterwards inquire what became of these people, whose very name I have not courage to ask?"—faltered Lord Fareham.

"I had no need to inquire. The annals of public justice acquainted me with the death of your mother, in a street brawl; and, as on the inquest, she was described as 'friendless,' I concluded that the grandmother, with whom she abided at the period of your birth, had already paid the debt of nature."

"But you have surely—some trace, some indication—of her antecedent modes of life?"

"None—absolutely none!"

"Yet something must have been known of my father?"—

"Not even his name. The old woman spoke of him as a hard and abandoned man, who had refused to contribute to your maintenance. I had nothing to gain by inquiring further. My sole anxiety, at the time, consisted in frustrating any wish they might have of obtaining further knowledge of *me*. From the moment of

losing sight of you, however, I verily believe they were never at the trouble of a single question."

"In short," persisted Lord Fareham, "I am as one alone in the world,—devoid of a single natural tie!"—

"Not if you will accept the fatherly affection I offer you!" replied Sir James, in softened accents. "Be mine, Henry!—Whatever you may determine as regards your resignation of the rights you still enjoy, rely, I beseech you, upon my unchanged, and unchangeable friendship. I am alone in the world. I am heirless. Had not unfortunate circumstances determined me to introduce you (Heaven knows with a purpose very different from all that has occurred) into the Arlingham family, I might have been tempted to rear you as my own. The peculiar manner in which you first attracted my attention, always appeared to me the result of providential intervention; and, but that Selina's afflictions were at that moment all in all to me, I should unques-

tionably have rescued you from your career of wretchedness, and supplied means for your education."

The heart of Lord Fareham swelled within him. The idea of being regarded as an object of charity by a man he liked so little as Sir James De Lisle, was cruelly at variance with the habits of his previous life. Alas ! what would he have given, at that moment, had the Earl of Arlingham,—the noble, the excellent, the accomplished Earl of Arlingham,—whom he was no longer to regard as a father,—been at least the benefactor claiming his respect and gratitude, instead of that worldly-minded man !

With these angry feelings rankling in his mind he withdrew from the presence of his host, on pretence of having need of repose ;—and instead of meeting him on the morrow, as has been already described, furtively quitted his house. And though he had now obtained the first object of his desire, in the opportunity of solitary meditation, his feelings were, if possible,

more agonizing than when still under the numbing pressure of the first discovery.

In that house, there was every thing to stimulate his regrets. Over the chimney-piece of his room, hung a portrait of the beautiful woman whom he had hitherto loved and lamented as a mother; the Countess of Arlingham, whose gentle virtues were embalmed in the tears of her family and friends. Though still a boy when deprived of her tender affection, he cherished the memory of her excellence as that of a saint. And to exchange *her*, to exchange the spotless being whose eyes seemed fixed upon his own as he gazed fondly on her picture, for every thing that was most degraded in human nature,—*this, this* was bereavement, indeed !

Around him, too, were so many mementos of early happiness,—of early affection ;—of the goodness and greatness of the man who had loved him so dearly, and so earnestly laboured to render him an honour to his name !

On the book-shelves around him, were the favourite works they had read together; the Tacitus, with annotations from the pencil of Lord Arlingham; the Montaigne, dog's-eared at his favourite passages; the Homer and Shakspeare, from which, in his holidays, the idolized boy used to delight his father by voluntarily getting portions by heart. *There* was the letter-box, containing a correspondence, every page of which might be said to contain an antidote to the letters of another celebrated Earl to his son, as inculcating all that is manly, frank, and consequently noble. *There* was the marble stand to which, during his stay in Berkeley Square, he was accustomed to append his grandfather's old-fashioned watch, a family relic, a gift from William III. to the first Earl of Arlingham. *There*, above all, was the chair in which, some months before, he was seated, when Lord Arlingham entered the room bringing open in his hand the letter of the Earl of Clantullin, authorising the addresses of the over-

joyed Fareham to his daughter, Lady Evelyn Lorn.

Every thing around him, in short, was instinct with affecting reminiscences, cementing anew the ties about to be rent asunder for evermore ; and heavy moans burst from the overcharged bosom of the hapless young man, as he turned from the contemplation of these things, with feelings he had little expected those familiar objects of his daily life ever to inspire.

He rose and leant against the chimney-piece, involuntarily directing his swimming eyes towards the fair form of her who had been so long the idol of his filial affection.

“Would—would that I died with her !” was his faltered ejaculation ; and the exhausting paroxysm of grief which succeeded, was so far beneficial that, combined with the sleeplessness of the preceding night, and fatigues and emotions of the day, it induced him to throw himself on the sofa, where, ere another hour had elapsed, he fell into a deep sleep.

Already the night was far advanced ; and scarcely had daylight dawned, when he was aroused from his unnatural slumbers, by a tapping at his door, and the asthmatic wheezings of the old housekeeper calling upon his name.

CHAPTER IV.

For now I stand as one upon a rock,
Environ'd with a wilderness of sea,
Who marks the waxing tide grow, wave by wave,
Expecting ever that some horrid surge
Will, in its brinish bowels, swallow him.

SHAKSPEARE.

IT was some minutes before Lord Fareham could collect from the old lady's inarticulate mutterings, that a gentleman insisted upon seeing him; and his last impression of intrusive officiousness being connected with Mr. Harbottle Driftington, he issued a peremptory order to be denied.

“I cannot see him—I can see no one!”—cried he, half opening the door, and to the amazement of Mrs. Smith, appearing, as she supposed, already dressed for the day.

" My dear Henry," cried a well-known voice, instantly interposing, " you will not, I trust, refuse to receive *me*? I arrived from Holme Court at a late hour last night," continued De Lisle, profiting by the half-open door, to make his way into the still half-darkened room. " Having ascertained at Woolsthorpe that you had taken your place for London, I disobeyed your instructions about despatching your man and baggage to Fareham Castle, satisfied that such a measure would only unnecessarily excite the alarm of Lord Arlingham. All still remains at my house; whither I earnestly hope you will to return with me."

Lord Fareham reserved his reply till Mrs. Smith, (who was awkwardly pushing open the window-shutters, and revealing to view the confusion of the room with the half extinguished fire, and candles burning to their sockets), should see fit to withdraw.

" You might have inferred my desire to be alone, and my determination to remain in town,

from the mode in which I quitted your house!" said he, as the door closed after her. "I wish to be free in body and mind for the contemplation of my frightful situation."

"The society of so sincere a friend as myself, need surely be no impediment to your reflections," said Sir James, in his usual bland and persuasive voice. "I should not have hazarded, my dearest Henry, my heart-rending revelation, but that I felt I had you safe under my roof,—secure of all the affectionate alleviation in my power to offer you. I did not dream of your escaping from me, as from an enemy. I did not dream of your flying off to this desolate solitary home, to brood over your troubles. All I could do, was to follow you,—as under such circumstances I would have followed a child of my own. Do not deny me the poor consolation of being with you in the most trying hour of your life."

The address of De Lisle was so earnest, that Lord Fareham had not courage to give vent

to the reproaches that rose to his lips. It was impossible to say to a man, whose voice was tremulous with emotion, “It is *you*—you alone, who have brought me to this!”—He suffered Sir James De Lisle to talk on without reply, and at the close of an hour, the specious arguments of one who called himself a friend, had induced him to pledge himself that, for the space of a month to come, he would take no step towards acquainting Lord Arlington with his fatal discovery of the extraordinary nature of their relative position.

“This is all I *exact* of you, my dearest Henry!” said De Lisle, after receiving this solemn promise. “That you will come back with me to Holme Court, I only entreat; and with little hope of your granting the petition of one against whom you have so many causes of displeasure. I entreat it, however, as one who has been the involuntary cause of evil to you, and would fain be the active origin of good. I entreat it of you as a christian, who

is required to forgive his enemies;—I entreat it as——”

“ Why waste all this eloquence on an abject wretch like *me*? ”—cried Lord Fareham, with uncontrollable bitterness. “ I am now no more than I was when you first found me, wailing with pain and starvation, at a gin-shop door! Dispose of me now, therefore, as you did then. Thrust me where I have no right, and no desire to be.—Treat me as you have ever done, like a wretched puppet——”

“ Wrong *me*, as you will, but wrong not yourself ! ” interrupted Sir James De Lisle. “ You were then, my dear Henry, a helpless infant. You are now a man;—a man whose mind is replete with instruction,—a man whose heart is warm with feeling,—a man whose character is tempered by the highest principles. You have within you the germ of distinctions as honourable as those you have been made to usurp. You may become the founder of a race as glorious—more glorious than that of

the Earls of Arlingham. As you stand before me, I know you to be my superior ;—superior in talent and information,—superior in energy of soul,—superior in all, perhaps, but the tact which enables us to turn such endowments to account. Instead, therefore, of hating me as a tyrant in possession of a secret fatal to your well-being, you should regard me as one who, valuing and respecting you, would fain go hand in hand in retrieving all that is past, and palliating all that is to come.”

“All that is past is irremediable!”—replied Lord Fareham, coldly.

“The future, however,” persisted Sir James, “the future is still in your power. The future is *always* in our power. We are not, as the weak and unprincipled pretend, carried on like stocks and stones by the force of the current of circumstances, unless we *be* stocks and stones, and deserve to be no better. On the extremest verge of a precipice, we have still the power to restrain our footsteps.”

The mild and persuasive tone affected by Sir James, was gradually assuming over the mind of his auditor the power which a person evidently self-possessed, attains over one whose spirit is perturbed by distracting emotions. Lord Fareham, knowing himself to be battling with a tempest, contemplated his companion, as firm, steady, and at ease upon the shore.

“What is it you require of me?” said he at length.

“That you return with me to my hotel to breakfast; and after breakfast, to Holme Court.”

Lord Fareham shook his head. Compliance with these demands seemed like a first concession towards signing a compact with the evil one!—Once established under the influence of Sir James, he felt that he should soon succumb and subscribe to whatever further terms might be exacted of him.

“I will *not* return to Holme Court!” said he, firmly.

“ You intend then to proceed to Fareham Castle, and with the certainty before you of breaking your solemn pledge of secrecy !”

“ I intend to proceed, (after a few days spent in town, in tranquil self-examination,) to Fareham Castle. But your confidence in the principles you have just done me the honour to praise, must be indeed slight, since you imagine that the mere circumstance of being under the same roof with Lord Arlingham, will induce me to forfeit my word of honour to yourself.”

“ On the contrary, it is the honesty of your soul that alarms me. You do not know yourself, Henry, if you suppose it possible you could live with him whom you still love as a father and respect as one of the first of mankind, in all the open confidence arising from the tie supposed to subsist between you, without speedy self-betrayal. Within four and twenty hours of your re-establishment at home, all would be known !”—

Lord Fareham was silent. He felt the im-

possibility of answering for himself that this would not be the case. While he was still hesitating, Sir James, who had been standing near the fire-place, suddenly pointed to the portrait of Lady Arlingham gracing the chimney-piece.

“By the memory of her who was so dear to us both!”—said he, “by the memory of my beloved kinswoman who was so fond a mother to your infancy, who nursed you through your childhood with such passionate tenderness, and, in her last moments, bequeathed you to my care and vigilance in the event of your becoming fatherless, ere you attained to man’s estate,—by *her* memory,—by the loving eyes that even now seem bent upon you, Henry!—I adjure you to hear me, and comply!”—

After an involuntary glance towards the sweet face which was still to him as that of a super-human being, the unhappy young man controlled the choking sensations in his throat sufficiently to reply, that he would follow Sir

James to Holme Court in the course of a day or two.

“No, you must bear me company!”—cried the pertinacious friend. “Forgive me, if I say that I cannot, just now, trust you in London alone.”

Harassed by his pertinacity, the resolution of Lord Fareham again gave way.

“Leave me, now!” said he. “Give me only till one o’clock to be my own master; and if you will call for me on your way to Holme Court, I am at your disposal.”

Too well was the good faith of his victim known to Sir James, to admit of any fear that this promise was a mere pretext to get rid of him. When Lord Fareham asserted an intention, there was nothing to apprehend.

“At one o’clock, then, expect me!”—said De Lisle, forcing his young friend to shake hands with him at parting. “In this you have deferred to *me*. In all else, my dearest Henry, you will find me disposed to make your wishes my law.”

The object of Lord Fareham in obtaining this brief reprieve, was simply to visit the miserable localities pointed out to him by De Lisle as the scene of his early misfortunes ; and having swallowed a hasty breakfast, he set forth upon his gloomy pilgrimage.

It was a miserable morning ; much such a one as De Lisle had described in narrating the incident of their first encounter ; and as the young man proceeded on foot along Piccadilly towards the Seven Dials, at an hour when he had never before happened to find himself at that season on the pavement of London, there was little in the dreary objects around him to recal the vivacities of that crowded thoroughfare at a more auspicious season of the year.

The shop-windows, not yet furnished for the day, were dim with frost. A few miserable hackney-coaches on the stand, and a few huckster's carts, had possession of the street ; nor was there a single object stirring, to distract the reverie of Lord Fareham, as, wrapped in his

great coat to the chin, and with his hat drawn over his eyes, he turned off from Coventry Street to the wretched spot specified by Sir James ;—a by-street of the lowest character, to reach which, he was obliged repeatedly to address himself for information to passengers of a description fully to account for the churlish brutality of their replies.

At length, the gift of a shilling to an urchin sufficiently ragged to justify the alms which he appeared too sullen or too cold to ask, obtained not only a direction, but a guide ; —the little wretch, hobbling on before, till they reached the junction of the streets described by Sir James ; at the angle of which, as not unusual in such a neighbourhood, stood a gin-palace, the legitimate successor, in the flashy days of the Gilded Age, to the public house which had vended its British compounds somewhat less ostentatiously, one and twenty years before.

The transition served only to add to the

humiliation of Lord Fareham's reflections ! All that was connected with his wretched infancy seemed to have crumbled away, leaving glare and deception in its room.

There was no old woman now, seated on the doorstep. But several of a still more disreputable order were lurking about ; and as the grief-struck spectator cast his eyes on the miserable surrounding shops—the shave-for-a-penny barber's,—the low eating-house, whose viands must have revolted any but the starving poor,—the broker's, where the objects amassed appeared to consist of broken fragments of furniture and mis-matched jars and vials,—he felt himself to be in the midst of a population below the grade of all he had been hitherto accustomed to consider as his fellow-creatures.

Every sense was offended. A “compound of villainous smells” reached from every low-hatched door. A succession of unsightly objects greeted him in every direction. The few people stirring at that hour, were wretches galled by

the miseries of life into ferocity.—Mothers screeched threateningly to their straying children. Husbands menaced with their fists the wives who presumed to warn them to their work. And while the heart of Lord Fareham rebelled within him at sight of the inhumanity of these wretches, a secret voice appeared to whisper, “*These, these, be thine own people and thy father’s house!*”

He was beginning to understand the measure of vengeance dealt upon his infant head by the wretched woman to whom he had been born as a curse,—the aggravation of a long life of labour and woe;—and after a few moments spent on the spot, the detestation he had conceived against Sir James De Lisle gave place to a milder feeling. It was something to have been redeemed from the contaminating atmosphere of such a region. It was something to have been snatched from contact with the vile, at a period when association is contagious. To have grown up among such wretches as those

he was now gazing upon with loathing, was a destiny which, even with the evil results now awaiting him, he could not be sufficiently thankful for having escaped.

The consequence, therefore, of this painful and humiliating visit, was a softening of his heart towards the man he had begun to regard as an enemy ; and the journey from London to Holme Court was less painful both to himself and Sir James De Lisle, than had been anticipated by either.

By tacit consent, they avoided allusion to all that had recently occurred to create misunderstanding between them. Sir James, though a moderately zealous politician, found no difficulty in affecting eager interest in the great event of the day, the Coalition announced by Mr. Harbottle Driflington to Lord Fareham,—of which he had heard more than enough, while breakfasting at the Travellers.—It was a safe topic for both.

“I can scarcely yet believe it to be true,”

observed Lord Fareham; “for though I have now been some weeks absent from my—from Lord Arlingham—he has repeatedly written to me—more than once hazarded allusion to the embarrassed position of ministers,—but, never even hinted at this unexpected accession of strength.”

“In my opinion, this strengthens the probability of the report,” observed De Lisle. “It is a point on which he would scarcely like to commit himself, even to you, while uncertain of the success of his projects. At all events, the rumour is too general to be wholly void of foundation; and in the excitement of such a triumph, Lord Arlingham will be less free to note anything unusual in your spirits and deportment.”

“Thank Heaven, he will also have something to compensate the afflictions in store for him!” sighed Lord Fareham.—“Yet, why do I say so?—His public distinctions were ever subsidiary in his heart to his affection for myself!—From

the moment I was able to understand the importance of his pursuits and take an interest in his avocations, even his service to his country was strengthened and stimulated by the prospects of connecting *me*, at some future time, with its welfare and glory. Let me not, however, invalidate the purity of his patriotism! England and the Queen have not a more devoted servant. But I feel convinced that the incentive to exertion which others find in their vanity or ambition, resulted in *him* from the hope of creating a great name for his son, and a good son to do it honour."

De Lisle was silent. The filial enthusiasm of his companion was bitterness to his taste. But it was too much his policy to propitiate Lord Fareham, to admit of even a covert sneer at the hollow virtue thus described,—a narrow foundation for so grand a superstructure as patriotic statesmanship!—He remained silent therefore;—rejoicing that he had omitted to write excuses previous to his hurried visit

to London, to two or three country neighbours, who had been previously engaged to spend a few days with him at Holme Court; so that, on arriving, he was sure of the stir and bustle inseparable from such visitations, to relieve the *gêne* of a *tête-à-tête* with one to whom even the most indifferent topic afforded matter for personal application.

As he expected, his arrival and that of his guests, had been prepared for by his well-ordered establishment. Lights and fires were blazing. One party of his visitors was beforehand with him; and when Lord Fareham and himself made their appearance in the drawing-room, after a hasty change of dress, dinner was on the point of being announced. Sir Edward and Lady Middleton and their daughter Helen, with two neighbouring squires, (the younger of whom, Mr. Sitwell, the member for the neighbouring borough, was understood to be a pretendant to her hand), were awaiting the signal of their host to adjourn to the dining-room.

And who that saw it given,—who that heard his well-bred apologies for being late, and witnessed his serene suavity of deportment,—could one moment have surmised the scenes of agitation and dismay through which that singular man had been struggling for the last eight and forty hours !

At all times, as convivial among his neighbours as he was measured and reserved among those more closely connected with him, Sir James De Lisle was one of the many who pass for friendly among their acquaintances, and for cold among their friends. On the present occasion, the spur of his peculiar position rendered him unusually talkative and sociable ; and the forced spirits he felt himself compelled to borrow, were borrowed with the recklessness of a spendthrift. Never had he been known so talkative. The table at Holme Court, proverbial in the neighbourhood for its brilliancy, surpassed itself. That ancient dining-chamber, which, but two nights before, had echoed to

the single solemn voice of the man whose story was a story of life and death to its solitary auditor, now rang with the chink of glasses, the levity of mirth, and blazed with the lights of festivity.

Watchful, even in the utmost of his seeming unconcern, Sir James saw with satisfaction that the habitually temperate Lord Fareham was flinging down copious draughts of champagne. Seated beside Helen Middleton, a merry open-hearted country romp, his spirits rose so high, that the gay girl who, having hitherto seen in Sir James's annual guest a taciturn young gentleman apparently too proud for their country pleasures, concluding that her smiles must have achieved a conquest, laughed louder and prattled more freely than ever; to the utter dismay of poor Sitwell who, already disgusted as a member of the opposition by the news of the wondrous political triumph of the Earl of Arlingham, had very little patience with the sallies of his Lordship's son, or the favour with which

they were rewarded by the volatile lady of his love.

So hollow is half the mirth by which we are stunned amid the scenes of social life!—The gaiety of the young Lord, the cheerful hospitality of his host, were false as the vizards of a masquerade; and of the seven personages who retired to rest that night under the ancient roof of Holme Court, not one but had been acting a part:—Sitwell, to disguise his jealousy,—his muzzy brother squire to appear as sober as a judge,—the Middletons to conceal their satisfaction at the evident admiration of the heir of Fareham Castle for their pretty daughter,—Sir James De Lisle to hide his feelings of triumph,—Lord Fareham, his agony of despair!—

CHAPTER V.

As the morning steals upon the night
Melting the darkness, so their rising senses
Begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle
Their clearer reason.

SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN the triflers of the London world have been playing fantastic tricks overnight under the influence of champagne, before they meet again, their love or hatred has been tamed down by the lapse of a certain number of hours, and intervention of a considerable variety of personages.

But when people under the same circumstances are collected within the walls of a country house, their re-encounter on the morrow at breakfast affords a curious study for the sober ones of the party.

As the little group gradually re-collected

itself in the old dining-room at Holme Court the following day, round an ample breakfast table, it was amusing enough to watch the air of pretended listlessness with which the country coquette wore the gay ribbons purporting to captivate the heir of an earldom ; or the zeal with which her father and mother addressed themselves to their coffee and partridge pie, in order not to embarrass Lord Fareham by their scrutiny, when he proceeded to take the place purposely left vacant by her side.—Still more diverting was the suppressed indignation which twitched in the abrupt movements of the discomfited Squire, thrown doubly into the minority by the triumphs of the house of Arlingham ! If the merriment of the others had been exaggerated overnight under the exhilarating influence of sparkling Ay, the forced laughter of poor Sitwell over his tea, while awaiting the entrance of Lord Fareham to renew his assiduities to Helen Middleton, was almost hysterical.

Still, however, his Lordship came not. The Middletons cast sidelong glances at the door, when the old butler brought in a *réchaud* of cutlets, or the footman a reinforcement of crumpets; while poor Sitwell ran considerable hazard of a dislocation of the vertebræ, by the obstinacy with which he kept his eyes upon his plate, while furtively watching the movements of his treacherous fair one.

Still, Lord Fareham came not; and just before the conclusion of breakfast, the only person present to whom his comings and goings were a matter of unconcern, (the muzzy Squire, whose faculties had been too completely offuscated by champagne the preceding evening, to note what was going on among his friends,)—carelessly observed—

“Lord Fareham will succeed to cold tea, I’m afraid!—I should not have expected *him* to be the latest of the party.”

“On the contrary, he was the *earliest*,” replied Sir James De Lisle, apparently as un-

concerned as his interlocutor. “ Fareham was off a couple of hours ago.”

“ *Off?*”—ejaculated such of those present as could command their powers of utterance.

“ I thought he was here for the remainder of the week?”—observed Sir Edward Middleton, with an air of indifference.

“ Oh ! *dear no, papa,*” stammered his daughter, unwilling to let it be supposed *she* was startled by the movements of one with whom she had talked on such confidential terms the preceding night ; while poor Sitwell looked doubtful whether to rejoice at the absence of his rival, or resent the confidence reposed in the blushing Helen.

“ *I was not prepared for quite so abrupt a departure!*” observed Sir James De Lisle, pretending to fix his attention on the newspaper he was folding. “ Fareham is seldom in a hurry to leave me. But a letter by this morning’s post, required his immediate presence at Fareham Castle.”

"Ay, ay!—they have a large party staying there, I know," observed the muzzy Squire, who, in the absence of soda water, had been cooling his fever with a fourth cup of green tea. "My friend Jakes, who keeps the Arlingham hounds, wrote me word he expected a famous meet, in consequence of the party at Fareham."

"I fear he will be disappointed," replied De Lisle; "for it is of a grave character,—a political party.—Few sportsmen among them, I imagine.—It was in consequence, indeed, of its sober nature, that Fareham fancied he might be spared a day or two longer. The attractions of our little circle here, would probably have made a few days at Holme Court *peculiarly* acceptable!" he continued, to the great delight of his half-giggling, half-blushing guest. "But Lord Arlingham's summons must have been pretty peremptory; for at eight this morning, half an hour after the arrival of the post, Fareham was at my bedside, asking indulgence for his sudden

departure, and with post-horses already at the door."

"I should not be surprised," cried the muzzy Squire, giving utterance to the thought which suggested itself to every person present,— "if his father's letter had announced this Coalition business, of which all the morning papers seem so full."

"If the papers are full of it, surely it is somewhat late in the day to communicate the state secret to his only son!" sneered poor Sitwell. "More likely, the lion wishes to assign to his whelp a portion of the spoil obtained by his intrigues. The sucking politician will probably get his share in the general scuffle."

"There is scarcely any post to which Lord Fareham's abilities are not calculated to do honour," observed Sir James De Lisle, stiffly; "for he is one of the most rising young men of the day. But I fancy his business at home is of a domestic nature. My young friend has a stronger leaning towards the duties of private

than of public life. Shall we move into the drawing-room, or is any one inclined for billiards?"—added he, rising, and satisfied that the explosion of the shell thus skilfully thrown would divert the attention of all present from his own vexation at the escape of his guest.

For an escape it indisputably was. Though Lord Fareham had really placed in his hands the letter of the Earl, requesting his immediate presence at the Castle in terms that admitted of no hesitation, so tortuous were the windings of his own mind, that he instantly decided the summons to be the result of a letter, requesting such a mandate, addressed by the young Lord to his father ere he quitted London the preceding day. De Lisle felt convinced that Henry had bespoken his sudden recall; and as the cross-post rendered such a complication of manœuvres possible, gave no faith to his expressions of anxiety lest aught should be amiss at Fareham Castle.

Nevertheless, nothing could be more sincere.

So methodical and consistent were the habits of the Earl of Arlingham, that the apparent caprice of recalling his son a few days sooner than the period originally assigned for his return, sufficed to excite the fears of one accustomed to his far-sighted regularity; and though, throughout his journey homewards, the reflections of the young man were painfully retrogressive, he was sufficiently uneasy on his father's account to lose sight, at times, even of his peculiar position.

"If my father should be ill—if my father should be in any strait as regards this strange Coalition?" mused he:—Lord Arlingham, his comfort and safety being in peril, presenting himself to his thoughts, or rather to his lips (for the first time since the disclosure of that hateful mystery) under the tender name of "father!"—"Considering the coarse observations which that vulgar fellow, Sitwell, hazarded last night, under the influence of wine till I was forced to call him to order, it is not im-

probable that some more responsible opposition member may have ventured upon observations requiring still more serious retribution. The career of a public man,—even when venerated as my father,—is always open to such hazards. But why, why did this never strike me so strongly before?—Alas! now that the tie which unites us is on the eve of being rent asunder, it seems to acquire double value!—No!—I never loved him so truly as since the hateful discovery that I am not his son!"

As he drew towards the close of his short journey of thirty miles, and caught sight of the flag usually hoisted at the Castle, during the residence of the Earl, his heart throbbed with anxiety, and he felt impressed with a new sense of the grandeur and dignity of the place. How little less than princely were its towers! —How authoritative and predominant its position, both physical and moral! How reverently were the hats of grave men and old touched to him as he drew towards home, by those who

respected him only as “the son of the Earl of Arlingham!”—How fondly did the young children run to the cottage doors, to gaze upon a carriage honoured by the armorial escutcheon of the unfailing friend of the poor!—

A sigh of relief escaped his heart as he passed under the old turreted gateway, and in reply to his hurried interrogation to the venerable porter, received an assurance that all was well at the castle, and “My Lord just gone out riding with his Grace the Duke of Hythe, Lord Finland, and the other gentlemen staying in the house;”—an announcement affording double comfort, in the certitude of his father’s health, and of a short respite previous to their dreaded interview.

According to the customs of the castle, the Earl would most likely return towards dusk; and thus, they would meet with less chance of exposure on his own part of the emotions which, the more he strove to repress them, the more thoroughly defied his power of control.

He had not, however, been half an hour alone in the state apartments,—left to the survey and influence of all from which he must shortly disunite himself for ever—before he longed for the return of the party. Any thing were welcome that broke the spell of that terrible contemplation!—Seizing his hat and cloak, he rushed from the house; then, unwilling to be far absent at the moment of Lord Arlingham's arrival, pursued his way along a terrace flanking the northern rampart of the castle; which presented at that season so bleak and cheerless a promenade, as always to be deserted in winter time. There, he was sure of solitude. There he might contemplate undisturbed the dreary landscape and stormy wintry sky so congenial with his perturbed feelings.

A year had scarcely elapsed since he remembered having betaken himself to the same spot, for the recomposure of his spirit, while awaiting the answer of his father to his application for permission to pay his addresses to Lady Evelyn

Lorn. On that occasion, the issue had been favourable, *how* favourable to his hopes ! Folded to the bosom of his father on his return to the house, he had received, not only the sanction, but the thanks of the Earl, for the worthiness of his choice.

"I know not, my dear boy," said Lord Arlingham, "that I should have found courage to oppose you, had you proposed a daughter-in-law less suited to my taste ; but in this, as in all else, you have exceeded my fondest hopes. Could I have chosen a wife for you throughout England, one of my old friend Clantullin's daughters would have been the object of my preference."

And when, in consequence of the precarious state of the only and beloved sister to whom the attentions of Lady Evelyn Lorn were devoted, it was agreed that the marriage should be deferred till spring, Lord Arlingham appeared almost as disappointed as his son. During Lord Fareham's recent visit to the family at Brighton,

Lady Evelyn had often jestingly remarked that his compliments and attentions were far less lover-like than those of the Earl.

Such recollections and such reminiscences were not of a nature to raise his spirits ; and by the time he discerned the party of horsemen winding their way up the hill towards the old gateway, he felt utterly benumbed in soul and body, in place of the re-invigoration he had expected to derive from contact with the winter breeze. It was some comfort that, though the greater number of their Christmas guests were only to arrive on the morrow, his father was accompanied not only by the Duke of Hythe and his shrewd private secretary, Mr. Wilson Cringe, but by his son, Lord Thomas Aymer, and the Earl of Finland, one of the stiffest and coldest, but ablest of his political colleagues. No fear of a private interview for the present !—He was evidently only wanted at the castle to assist in entertaining its guests.

Another minute, and he was welcomed home

by them all, as though it were *their* cue to do the honours of Fareham Castle; while Lord Arlingham, delighted to witness the cordiality of the elder men of the party towards his son, satisfied his paternal affection, *à l'anglaise*, with a quiet shake of the hand.

" My friend Arlingham has had some difficulty, it seems, in bringing back his stray sheep to the fold ?" said the Duke, as they walked together into the library to await the dressing-bell. " We wanted you, yesterday, my dear Lord ; but you could not tear yourself from Brighton, eh ?—Well ! we have all been young in our time !—At all events, your absence enabled your father to favour us with your panegyric, in terms of which I will spare your modesty the repetition ! Tom has been sulky ever since. Tom fancies it was a got up thing ; and that I wanted to put his idleness and extravagance to the blush, by praises of your industry."

" Fareham knows better than to believe all this !"—cried Lord Thomas Aymer, laughing.

"Fareham is perfectly aware that I am the model young man of my day;—that I have proposed to every heiress going;—and never set foot on the turf, till I had nothing left to lose by it, having been cleaned out of my last guinea elsewhere."

"I trust *I* know better than to believe all *this!*!" replied the Duke; who, sufficiently stern with the rest of the world, allowed himself to be a little over-indulgent towards the extravagant sallies of his favourite son. "I am willing to suppose you a little less contemptible than you represent yourself; and, (if that will give you any comfort) to suppose that my friend Arlingham's paternal partiality, is almost as blind as my own."

Cheerful and chatty was the dinner that ensued. Politics were discussed in the tone of men of the world,—not with the priggism affected by the stilted sect of modern politicians—the "young England," whose beard and whiskers have not yet sprouted; while the

gossip of the world had its turn ; discussed in the tone of responsible men, who perceive with regret the growth of follies and vices in the few, which, if extended to the many, would be fatal to the best interests of the kingdom.

When, on the withdrawal of the servants with the ice-course, Lord Finland and the Duke proceeded to an exposition of their plans for the opening political campaign, with Mr. Wilson Cringe as their draughtsman and engineer, Lord Fareham, instead of emulating the air of undisguised *ennui* with which Lord Thomas Aymer listened to the recapitulation of majorities and minorities,—the disposal of such and such boroughs,—the actuations of such and such a member's mind—all the hidden machinery, in short, whose paltry levers and pulleys are essential to the grander movements of statesmanship,—sat with respectful deference, replying only in monosyllables to the bantering gossip with which Lord Thomas strove to divert his attention.

"When you have served your time, as I have, in the back slums of politics," whispered Lord Thomas, "you will be as sick of all this sort of thing as I am! Leave it to poor Cringe, who is paid for it, to put on a decent listening face, when my father sets in for a prose. In all honesty, you know that your thoughts are a thousand miles hence!"—

Lord Fareham could not deny it. But he might have asserted, with truth, that he was doing his utmost to reduce to order the chaos in which they were plunged, in order to give his attention to points involving, or likely to involve, the public credit of Lord Arlingham. Moreover, the private secretary of the Earl remaining in town for dispatch of business, during the absence of his principal, he was desirous of qualifying himself to lend such assistance, on the spur of the occasion, as Lord Arlingham might require from his pen.

The Earl required, however, far more than his utmost surmises had suggested!—

"I sent for you, my dear Fareham," said he, the first moment he was able to disencumber himself of his guests, and command time for a private audience, "to confirm the desultory reports you must have heard at Brighton, and which the nature of my party here supersedes perhaps the necessity of my announcing; namely, the valuable accession of strength which government has recently obtained. To you, I need not add that it has been obtained without discreditable sacrifices on either side; but through a mutual modification of opinion, produced by the march and changes of the times. But I may, and must add, my dear Fareham, that the resignations consequent upon this Coalition, (through the pettish irritation of men who assume as steadiness of principle what is, in fact, the result of irritation of temper), have opened an unexpected way for your entrance into public life. Some time ago, it was my wish that you should not come into parliament for a year or two. Events, public and domestic, have

altered my intentions. Your purposed settlement in life inclines me to believe that you will be all the happier for active employment. Your character has developed itself at an earlier age than I anticipated. In short, my dear boy, there is a seat waiting for you; and both the Duke and myself have decided that, towards the close of the session, when our new system has worked itself easy, a vacancy shall be made for you in the Home Department.—His Grace wishes to have you as his Under Secretary."

During this communication, Lord Fareham felt as if becoming gradually transfixed into marble; while Lord Arlingham, attributing the emotion by which his son was thus manifestly overwhelmed to the gratifying nature of his communication, almost regretted to perceive how thoroughly he could be unmanned by extrinsic circumstances. He had hoped to find him made of "sterner stuff." He had hoped to see him rise superior to the casualties of life.

After waiting a minute or two for the reply

which the young man could not command breath to utter, Lord Arlingham resumed, in a tone of less elation.

"I am satisfied that my friend Lord Clantullin will be the more likely to accelerate the period of your marriage," said he, "on finding you about to embark in the business of life. Though he ascribed his desire of procrastination solely to Lady Mary's illness, I suspect he considered you somewhat young to establish yourself, without occupation for your leisure to secure the steadiness of conduct desirable in a family man. When he sees you exert yourself in parliament, and knows you to be secure of a responsible appointment, he will be less nervous about intrusting you with the happiness of his child."

Still, Lord Fareham answered not a word; and the Earl was almost silenced, in his turn, by this ungracious apathy. He had touched two of the most vibrant chords of the human heart,—love and ambition; yet the lips of his

son emitted no sound of sympathy. He heard, and made no sign !

“ I cannot suppose, my dear Fareham,” added Lord Arlingham, in a more earnest tone, “ that you are insensible to the flattering distinction you have, in this instance, received at the hands of the Duke. For you know enough of his character and disposition to be aware that, were you fifty times my son, and he considered you disqualified either in talents or disposition for the service of the country, nothing would induce him to sanction, far less suggest, your appointment. My own partiality might have done much for you ; and for *that* I should not have required you to be grateful. But this is wholly his Grace’s doing ; and I hope and trust to find you properly sensible of so great an honour.”

“ I *am* sensible, more deeply sensible than you can possibly suppose,” faltered Lord Fareham with quivering lips ; “ sensible at once of his unmerited favour, my dearest father, and of

your considerate affection. But may I inquire," continued he, his agitation increased by the endearing term which emotion had forced from his lips, "whether it be indispensable to give an immediate reply to the proposition of his Grace? You spoke of the end of the session. Is it necessary, for some weeks to come, to fetter myself and you by accepting the appointment?"

"*Accepting* the appointment?"—exclaimed Lord Arlingham, scarcely fancying he heard aright, so impossible did it appear to *him* for such an alternative as refusal to present itself. "You do not mean to say, that you are disposed to hesitate?"—

"Circumstances," resumed the young man, "circumstances over which I have no control, compel me to pause before—before I entangle myself in—"'

Lord Arlingham rose from his seat, and fixed his eyes, with amazement, on his son; who, feeling that under such scrutiny he must give way, if closely questioned, and perhaps, forfeit his

word of honour pledged to De Lisle, attempted, for the first time in his life, a subterfuge with his father.

"Previous to taking so irretrievable a step as the public manifestation of my political principles," said he, "I should like to pause for reflection."

"To *pause* for *reflection*?"—reiterated Lord Arlingham, surprise and indignation struggling for mastery. "Has my care of your education, then, been so thoroughly thrown away, and is your deference towards your father of so slight a nature, that, at the eleventh hour, you have still to learn to distinguish your right hand from your left?—Still to ask yourself whether your father's career has been founded on just and equitable principles? Fareham!—you have grieved and disappointed me beyond all power of expression!"—

A vivid flush overspread the cheeks of the young man, thus apostrophized,—giving way immediately to livid paleness. His

heart revolted within him at the bitterness of these first fruits of his lamentable situation.

“ That I should have so completely mistaken you, all this time !” again ejaculated the Earl, unable to repress his feelings on perceiving, by the agitation of his son, that his conduct was not actuated by youthful caprice, but by some deep seated motive. “ I thought your heart open to me, as mine has ever been to you. From the moment you were able to distinguish right from wrong, I have never had a concealment from you as regards my private affairs. Even my public interests have been as freely confided to you, as though your views and opinions were, as you gave me reason to hope, identical with my own. In this conviction—in the belief that the spirit actuating your conduct was as congenial with mine as the blood flowing in your veins,—I have all but pledged myself to the Duke for your adherence to the administration we are forming !”

"I fear I cannot flatter myself," stammered Lord Fareham, struck with despair as the seemingly ungrateful part he was compelled to take developed itself before him,—“I fear I cannot flatter myself that my single voice will be of much consequence in his Grace’s eyes. It is impossible that *he* can extend towards me the generous partiality which——”

“Fareham! these are mere specious phrases!” cried Lord Arlingham, with indignation. “This is the first time in your life I ever heard you utter a word I felt to be dishonest. You are deceiving *me* or deceiving yourself. Who has wrought me such an injury as to estrange from me the heart and confidence of my son, I will not stoop to inquire. It cannot be De Lisle, your fond and faithful mother’s nearest kinsman. *His* views, are my own. In public life, as in private, we have walked hand in hand.—Next to myself, he is the person on earth, most interested in your well-doing; and it will afford him almost as much mortification, as it does

me, to find your character so much less candid than we had supposed."

"I have no right to be surprised that you judge me thus harshly!" said Lord Fareham, his tongue cleaving to his palate, as he shrunk under the contemptuous eye never before bent upon him, save with the expression of affection and approval. "If you knew, however, how miserably I am entangled, you would pity, rather than condemn me."

"*Entangled?*" exclaimed Lord Arlingham, almost gasping for breath. "This is becoming more and more alarming!—In God's name, what do you mean?—How long is it that I have lost over you the authority of a father? With what mysterious—what unreasonable connections have you degraded yourself, to render concealment necessary?—The Clantullins are truth and daylight. It is not among *them* you have learned the lesson of deceit!"

"I have *not* learned it!" cried Lord Fareham, proudly. "I have at least, no hypocrisy

to be ashamed of. It is because I choose to be frank with you, that I am forced, my Lord, to give you pain and displeasure; I must content myself to abide both, because, without forfeiting a solemn pledge, I cannot, at this moment, explain myself further. When hereafter you learn the motives of my conduct, I am convinced you will approve them."

There was something so decided and manly in the deportment of the young man, whom the accusation of hypocrisy had suddenly roused to a sense of his own dignity, that the angry feelings of the Earl involuntarily relaxed as he contemplated the countenance, replete with sensibility, which contained all the sunshine of his life.

"I do not ask you for a full explanation of your strange conduct, Harry!" said he. "If, by some unlucky concatenation of circumstances you are forced to maintain concealments from me, I submit;—satisfied that your affection will shorten my penance of suspense as far as

lies in your power.—But it would cut me to the soul were my new colleagues to perceive that I do not possess so much as the political confidence of my son. How can I expect to command *their* respect, when yours has escaped me?"

"It has *not* escaped you, my dearest and best friend!"—cried Lord Fareham, seizing his hand with uncontrollable emotion, and pressing it to his lips. "Dictate what terms to me you will!"—

"All I require is that you give the party now assembled around us, no cause to infer the existence of dissension between us. Leave it to *me* to raise obstacles to your *immediate* acceptance of office. But do not afford grounds to my friends and colleagues for supposing that I have reared a changeling as my son."

The expression thus vaguely and accidentally used, drove every vestige of colour from the face of the young man; and he sat gazing upon the Earl, (who, after pacing the room during

the more stormy portions of their dialogue, had stopped short, and was leaning on the opposite table), with an air of idiotic stupefaction.

“ Certainly!—Every thing you wish!—Dispose of me as you choose.—I shall attempt no further opposition!” said he, with blanched and quivering lips;—then, hurrying from the room, to escape the more kindly expressions beginning to flow from those of Lord Arlingham in gratitude for this marked concession to his wishes, he hastened to his own apartment. There, throwing himself prostrate on the ground, he besought the mercy of Heaven for strength to support the conflicting distresses of his unexampled situation.

CHAPTER VI.

A fellow, who
Having been praised for bluntness, doth affect
A saucy roughness.

SHAKSPEARE.

It was a lucky thing, perhaps, for all parties, that Fareham Castle was about to become what the newspapers call “the scene of noble old English hospitality” for the remainder of the holidays.—The first few days having been secured by the Earl for the development and completion of his political projects, it only further remained for him to render his house agreeable to those with whom he trusted to enjoy, for the remainder of his days, the sort of friendship which is never so strongly cemented in England as by the bonds of political asso-

ciation ; and which, strangely enough, seemed to derive new force in the present instance from the former bitter animosities of the new co-adjutors.

Such appears to be the order of the age.—Of late years, public events have been taught to march with such colossal strides, that no human mind appears sufficiently far-sighted to foresee the future combinations by which they are likely to influence the destinies of nations.—The consequence is that, instead of the hereditary Whig and Toryism bequeathed from sire to son with the family liveries and armorial bearings,—so far from the political father entailing his principles upon his son, the boy is not even the father to the man, or the man to the veteran. Exaggeration and inconsistency being inseparable, extremes are apt to meet ;—and it is an undeniable fact that most of the absolutists of the day, began life with the most liberal opinions. In proportion as the sinews of their minds have grown stiff, and the

muscles of their hearts become ossified, have they renounced the faith that was in them; become sceptics as regards the perfectibility of human nature, and among the first to inflict the lash and collar of bondage upon those to whom they were the first to point out the blessings of liberty.—Nay, more than one among them, (like confederates turned Queen's evidence), have profited by their intimate knowledge of the haunts and habits of their former associates, to betray them to the hands of the enemy. The Duke of Hythe, if not exactly one of these, was undeniably an apostate; though by the vehemence of his early political demonstrations, he had appeared to abjure all right and title to recantation.

Such was the eminence, however, of his social position, and such the candour of his character, that those who knew him best were satisfied of his having acted from conviction. But if no one else mistrusted him, he mistrusted himself. The thirty pieces of silver

rattling in his pouch, seemed to convert him into a Judas ; and in order to show his indifference, under the shower of missiles which he every moment expected to find hurled at his head by the party to which he was accused of turning traitor, he overacted his part of recklessness, and assumed such flighty spirits to greet the fashionable circle arriving at the Castle, (persons less fully apprised than his excellent host, of the gradual and steady nature of his change of views) that he might have been supposed to have taken a page from the books of his son. Those who came prepared for a somewhat stiff party, in compliment to the grave habits of the Duke, were accordingly amazed to find him the most talkative of the set.

Unluckily, all persons who affect forced spirits, have need of a butt ; and as happy lovers have, from time immemorial, been made to pay tax for their felicity as privileged objects of raillery, the Duke seized upon Lord Fare-

ham to whet his wit upon. Young, prosperous, cheerful—there seemed some reason for exacting such a penalty at his hands ; and every time the conversation flagged among his colleagues, Lord Arlingham had the vexation of hearing his son roughly bantered as the new member—the future secretary—the uxorious bridegroom—the rising young man of the day who was to put them all to shame.—

“Wait till you have tried him !” cried Lord Thomas Aymer, addressing his father, intent only upon increasing his embarrassment. “I can promise you that, as squeamish as he looks, Fareham has heard the chimes at midnight before now,—eh, Fareham ?—So far from being the Industrious Apprentice you wish to make him out, your Grace would be edified indeed, were I at liberty to let his Christchurch secrets out of the bag.”

Lord Arlingham was startled. Were these random accusations about to afford him a clue to the mystery at present so unsearchable ?

"If Lady Evelyn Lorn could only guess with what a cinder of a heart she has to deal!" persisted Lord Thomas. "The scoriæ of a volcano are substantial by comparison! Let her only listen to Harbottle Driftington's account of his behaviour in the family of Lady Hester Hope. If they did but know the hazard they run in postponing the marriage!—I would bet my allowance for the next two years (were not every guinea pledged to my creditors) that the match never comes to pass, unless nailed within the next three weeks!"

All this was the mere flash-in-the-pan of fashionable persiflage,—the *nothing*, which, in the absence of *something*, serves to secure a dinner party from the disgrace of a dead silence. But Lord Fareham, susceptible in every fibre, fancied that the noisy raillery of the Duke and the pointed allusions of his son had a firmer foundation. A suspicion that the facts communicated to him by Sir James De Lisle, had, in some mysterious mode or other, tran-

spired, glanced into his mind ; and like a bayed stag, he became fierce and dangerous.

Amused, rather than annoyed, by what he estimated as the pettishness of a man who will not take his turn in being quizzed, Lord Thomas returned to the charge ; and with so little discretion, that most of the party present, perceiving Lord Fareham to be really offended, thought he was going too far. So angry, indeed, grew the retorts of the over-urged young man, that, in the course of the evening, for the first time in his life, Lord Arlingham rebuked him for want of temper and want of self-respect.

“ There cannot be a greater sign of an ill-born, ill-bred man,” said he, “ than to resent the pleasantries of the convivial hour. I should have hoped that a son of mine knew how to take as well as give, especially at my own table. You will make a bad member of the House of Commons, Fareham, if you cannot submit to be joked with.”

That these sorry jests were bitter earnest to the unfortunate victim, how was Lord Arlingham to surmise?—How could he suppose that what *he* mistook for tetchy peevishness, was the irrepressible outcry of despair?—

Unluckily, jesters, like children, are prompt in perceiving how far their pranks are authorised by those present. Lord Thomas Aymer, readily discerning that the fractiousness of his young friend was not backed by the Earl, on the morrow, his ill-timed pleasantries were renewed; for though true wit despairs to have recourse to the poor expedient of a butt, the shallow joker who finds a dull party hang heavily on his hands, finds such a flint to his steel an invaluable resource.

“By the way, my dear Fareham,” said he, “what is this story of Driftington’s about finding you locked up in a room at the Clarendon, and your nearly knocking him down, because he offered to walk home with you? Aware of my being Lord Arlingham’s guest, he writes to me

from Queen's Clere to inquire, in Miss Hope's name and his own, whether you have been picked out of the moat, or found dangling in one of your Gothic galleries, as he seemed to infer from the state of

Moody madness laughing wild
Amid severest woe

in which he left you, a few days ago, in Berkeley Square?"

"I should be almost as glad that Mr. Driftington found some better topic for his correspondence than my affairs, as that your Lordship found some better subject than his impertinence to amuse the present company!" said Lord Fareham with grave indignation.

"Impertinence, and my Lordship, coupled in a single sentence?" cried Lord Thomas unabashed; "since when, my dear fellow, have you grown so snappish?—or rather, since when so great a man, as to be tabooed against the joking of your friends?"—

"I must decline the honour of considering Mr. Driftington a friend of mine!" cried Lord Fareham ; "and since it appears—"

He stopped short. The eye of Lord Arlingham was fixed sternly and reprovingly upon him. He had promised the Earl that morning to control his temper, and bear patiently with the indiscreet badgering of the son of their distinguished guest.

"Let not the small remnant of my sojourn under his roof be disgraced by a brawl of my provoking!" was the painful reflection of the young Lord, as he now witnessed the renewed anxiety of him to whom he would fain have spared even the most trifling occasion for uneasiness. And to the surprise of all present, during the remainder of the day, he bore in enforced silence the ironical compliments of Lord Thomas Aymer, and with patience the more searching irony of his father.

The latter, however, was not a purposeless persecution. Regarding the talented son of his

colleague as a valuable accession to their party, the Duke of Hythe was desirous of ascertaining how far he rose superior to the ordinary weakness of boy-members,—how far he was “passion’s slave,” and consequently how far his own master ; and the ordeal which, in the beginning, promised ill for the credit of Lord Fareham’s temper, ended with establishing him high in favour with the Duke. Clever as he was, the statesman had not the tact to discriminate between the firmness of self-government, and the self-abandonment of despair.

But in proportion as his estimation of his political neophyte increased, was his own influence over the mind of Lord Fareham augmented. The moment the young Lord became established in his eyes as a man—an agent—an influence—a component part of the mighty engine of state called Power,—he became worth conciliating. Since he could bear being joked with, the Duke ceased to joke with him ; and, by raising him to his own level, and engaging

with him in those profound and luminous arguments apt to inspire all with whom he was at the trouble of conversing, with almost abject deference, made him wholly his own.

Unperceived by Lord Fareham, a web was thrown around him by the specious manner in which the Duke now addressed him as one of them,—a portion of his policy,—a recruit having taken the Queen's bounty and enlisted in her service.

For though Lord Arlingham was sincere with his son in exacting that his hesitation on this point should be withheld, for the present, from the heads of his party, he had himself been unable to conceal from his valued colleague the disappointment he had experienced.

“The mere practicality and priggishness of boyhood!” replied his Grace, on learning what had passed between them. “All clever lads of one or two and twenty have the pretension of seeing and judging for themselves; and but that the conceit is speedily taken out of

some of them by the rough schooling of society, while the pleasures of life tend to enervate the rest into the acquiescence of indolence, we should be having as many political sects start up to weaken the forces of the state, as there are varieties of Coxcombs produced by the premiums of the Horticultural!—Most young members set out with the pretension of independence: the very clever ones learn better of their own accord, and the moderately clever ones are taught. I have no means of taking measure of your boy's abilities, and parental measure is not to be trusted; so, for want of information, let us class him in the latter category, and see what we can do for his enlightenment.”

It was, however, rather to the weakness of Lord Fareham's heart, than to the strength of his head, that the experienced apostle addressed himself in his efforts at conversion. Having discerned the amiableness of the young man's disposition, the Duke commenced his

attack by praises of his father,—by more than praises,—by the deference of a superior mind to Lord Arlingham's opinion, and a profession of readiness to adopt any measure of his proposing.

In this utter self-abnegation, he seemed to take for granted the perfect coincidence of Lord Fareham. The governmental “*We*” seemed, in the long interview they held together, expressly and especially intended to comprehend the new colleague and the only son of the great minister.

All this was so ably and quietly accomplished, that the arrangement appeared irrevocably settled, long before Lord Fareham so much as perceived it to be in agitation; and, while simply, as he thought, replying to the arguments of his father's guest, he involuntarily adopted the form of the first person plural destined to unite him with the party ambitious of certifying him as its own.

By degrees, the Duke had the art to render

these conversations general; thus betraying the young man in whom, for his father's sake, he took an earnest interest, into similar avowals in presence of the formal Earl of Finland and the officious Mr. Wilson Cringe,—a sort of reporter of society, always at hand to take down a man's words, and bear witness to his looks and actions,—the salaried informer of the party.

Reconciled, meanwhile, to his own conscience by his previous explanations with his father, Lord Fareham was thoroughly off his guard. His whole heart being embarked in the success of his father and the establishment of his measures, nothing was so easy as to excite his enthusiasm, and draw out the resources of his mind, by pretended mistrust of the success of certain points of the policy of Lord Arlingham; so that, at the close of the week, the Duke had not only managed to exhibit him to his father's colleagues and neighbours, as the devoted adherent of their party, but

had conceived genuine admiration of his cultivation of mind, and energetic warmth of heart. He could understand a father's partiality for such a son.

On the eve of his departure from the castle, however, the Duke, satisfied that his bird was safely snared, made so cool an attempt to close the door of the cage upon him, that Lord Fareham was startled into perceiving how far beyond his intentions he had pledged himself. From the sparkling of Lord Arlingham's eyes, while listening to his noble colleague's allusions to his son as a steady official and active member, he saw that he was allowing the man about to undergo so cruel and overwhelming a blow, to prepare aggravation for his approaching disappointment by reckoning on his public services.

"Far worse!" mused he, in the solitude of his chamber, after retiring for the night. "When the terrible truth bursts upon him, it may appear as if I had wished to pre-assure myself

of his sanction to my *début* in public life, ere I revealed myself to him as an impostor. The world will have a right to infer that I secured the *imprimatur* of his and the Duke's recommendation, before I made my confessions. This must not be. I will *insist* on a release from De Lisle. He has no right, in addition to all my miseries, to expose me to this degrading accusation. To-morrow, I will write, and claim this justice at his hands."

But the morrow brought other suggestions. A letter from Lady Evelyn Lorn, entreated him to disengage himself as speedily as was in his power from the Fareham Castle party, and return to Brighton.

"I am most anxious to see you, dearest Fareham," wrote his plighted wife, "not alone, because your two last letters have been strangely incoherent, as though you had something on your mind, but because I have much to say to you. Come to me, dearest; I shall not be happy till we meet again."

The vigilant eye of the lover fancied he could discern a certain degree of tremulousness in the writing and folding of this earnest appeal. There wanted the usual firmness and decision characterizing even the letters formed by the hand of his beloved Evelyn. Something must be amiss with her. Evil to *her*, to the being so dear to his heart, was about to afford the overbrimming drop to his cup of wretchedness.

Not a moment would he have hesitated to quit the party, and hurry to Brighton for the satisfaction of his doubts. But there was no need to apply for Lord Arlingham's consent to such a proceeding. The little ministerial circle was breaking up; the Earl of Finland already gone. The Duke, his son and secretary were departing; and on his communicating to his father that he was about to start for Brighton, so far from opposing his project, the Earl proposed that they should travel together as far as London.

A *tête-à-tête* journey at that moment would,

however, have been too trying ! Instead, therefore, of consenting to wait till the morrow, he insisted upon the impossibility of a single hour's delay ; and the Earl, satisfied with the victory obtained for him over the irresolution of his son by the influence of the Duke, was too happy in his prospects, public and domestic, to create unnecessary difficulties.

Again, therefore, was Lord Fareham exposed to the torment of his solitary reflections as he made his way to town. For the last week, the stir and excitement of the society in which he had been engaged, perpetual inter-communication with a mind so active and so enlightened as that of the Duke, and the necessity of doing the honours of home to the rest of the party, had left him less leisure for chewing the bitter cud. He had suffered himself to be carried away by the current of social cheerfulness from the survey of his calamities ; or rather he had flung himself into the current, in the desperate hope of losing sight of them for a time. And

now that he was once more alone with them, they seemed to have grown and strengthened in the interval !—

Still, as one bitter suggestion after another obtained possession of his mind, there was a cruise of oil for the surface of those stormy waves in the certainty of Evelyn's affection. The few hurried lines of the morning had knit anew, and with stronger force, the tie uniting them together. She was evidently out of spirits. Some unexplained cause seemed to depress her almost as much as himself. Taking the letter again from his pocket for a new examination, though every line and syllable was duly impressed upon his mind, he determined that the hand had trembled sorely which traced those uncertain lines.

Her sister was doubtless worse. They loved each other dearly, those twain ; Lady Clantullin had been some years dead ; and the girls, reared by an excellent, but somewhat strict and peculiar father, found in each other's

society double comfort and delight ; so that the illness by which, for nearly a year past, Lady Mary had been afflicted, seemed to enhance the value of the attachment affording promise of new ties and new affections to supply the place of the one, about to be so cruelly interrupted.

“ Yes ! she is worse, and my poor dear precious Evelyn requires the comfort of my society during the intervals of watching beside her sick couch !” was his final comment on the letter, after a fiftieth perusal. “ What a moment alas ! to plunge her into further grief, when the grave is about to close over the sister of her heart!—Poor Mary !—Mary would have consoled her ! Mary, with her gentle, affectionate temper, would have taught her patience under a dispensation like that impending over her head. But every thing, *every thing* combines against me ! The authoritative habits of the Duke of Hythe have entangled me in the public career from which I shall be driven with shame,

when my humble origin is discovered ; and the sorrows of my poor Evelyn render it incumbent upon me to cherish, till the last moment, her illusive prospect of becoming my wife. It would be base and unmanly were I to profit by the softness of her feelings in her hour of affliction, to extort a renewal of her avowal of affection—affection for the outcast,—the beggar,—the child of shame,—the starveling sold by the kindred who loathed him, like Joseph by his brethren. No ! no ! this must not be !—I *will* delay, as Sir James has proposed, the fatal discovery ;—delay it till she is able to hear the worst, and calmly decide whether—but oh, God ! can I contemplate such an alternative, and live ?”—

To approach the house of sickness is always dispiriting. To approach it with a load upon the mind such as now depressed that of poor Lord Fareham, rendered the journey to Brighton, indeed painful. He arrived there at too late an hour to admit of more than a message of

inquiry ; the answer to which was just what he apprehended : " During the last two days, Lady Mary had become much worse."

" I knew it was so !" murmured he, shrugging his shoulders. " Poor dear Evelyn ! At this moment, though little aware of all that awaits her, she is as miserable as myself."

And with a lover's longing, instead of betaking himself to refreshment and rest, though midnight was past, he sallied forth towards Brunswick Square, to comfort his eyes with the aspect of the house containing the object of his affections. Even the reflection of the watchlight in the windows of the sick-room, would, he fancied, be satisfactory.

It was a bright and frosty night ; and the pavement of the square lay before him clear as at noon day. Unluckily, the wanderer had not solitary possession of the spot. One of those little fussy, stuffy, attempts at a *soirée*, which render dulness palpable in the early part of a Brighton winter, was proceeding at an

adjacent mansion ; before the door of which, were the usual melancholy allotment of a couple of dowager-coaches, and a few flys ;—the horses and drivers alike oil-skinned from head to hoof.

At the moment, Lord Fareham was passing the door of the house (pointed out as the scene of festivity by an occasional screech outpassing the rattle of a piano), a man enveloped in a cloak, rushed so impetuously from the door as nearly to precipitate the unlucky passer by among the wheels of the flys.

A still greater calamity, however, than the blow, was the apology that followed ; especially when the apologist, in removing his comforter from his mouth to make himself audible, exhibited the eager face of Mr. Harbottle Driftington !

“ My dear Fareham !—Pon my life and honour, I am inexpressibly shocked ! I trust I have not hurt you ?” cried he, seizing the arm of his struggling companion. “ I thought

I had massacred some Hottentot proceeding to what Mrs. Brown Green has the impudence to call a concert; and whether done to death by *my* awkwardness, or her daughter's squalling, what matters?—But *you* are surely not going into this heinous woman's hot-closet?"

"I am going home, if you will give me leave," said Lord Fareham, quietly attempting to disengage himself.

"Ah!—yes!—by the way, I forgot my vicinity to Clantullin's head quarters!—How long have you been here?"

"Scarcely an hour; and my head quarters, so far from being at Lord Clantullin's, are at the York Hotel."

"The deuce they are!—That's monstrously lucky,—for I am staying there myself!—We'll walk home together. And how have you found Lady Mary?—Devilish bad, I'm afraid. Hopwig the apothecary, (whom I left just now shaking himself in ecstasies at Miss Brown

Green's performance, as though he were one of his own draughts), told me he thought her in a very sad state.—He asked me, however, whether Lord Clantullin had met with any kind of family affliction?—for that t'other day when he called, Lady Evelyn was sobbing her heart out over a letter?—He might as well have kept it to himself, eh?—as he is on confidential terms in the house.—I told him, I'd lay my life the letter was from *you*; and that if you were only half as crusty with your lady love, as ten days ago in town with your humble servant, I didn't wonder at the poor girl's being out of sorts.”

“I trust you do not, even by inference, liken any feeling with which you might inspire me to those I entertain, or am likely to exhibit towards Lady Evelyn Lorn?” said Lord Fareham, haughtily.

“People who are in the habit of snubbing their friends, sometimes fall into the other mistake,” said the unabashed Drifington.—

"But how *is* Lady Mary?—For I suppose you've been spending the evening there?"

"I told you before, that I arrived in Brighton an hour ago."

"Then, perhaps, I'm preventing your going there?" cried Drifftington, without, however, relinquishing his arm.

"It has struck twelve;—somewhat an untimely hour for a visit to a sick house.—I shall not intrude on the family till tomorrow."

"Between ourselves, my dear Fareham, as her disorder is decidedly consumptive," resumed Mr. Harbottle Drifftington, "don't you feel a little uneasy, sometimes, at the idea of introducing such a malady into your family? Your father's sisters are shocking sickly women;—and Lord Arlingham himself is a baddish subject. *You* are the only healthy sprig of the family tree. *You* are not the least like any of them,—as I've often heard remarked;—no! nor the least like the late Lady Arlingham, or

any of the De Lisle family. I've often noticed it to Sir James.—*You* are dark.—*You* have a decidedly Irish face. Yet I fancy you've no Irish connexions—eh ?—However, as I was saying,—with this sort of hereditary delicacy, I wonder you're not afraid of so fragile a cross as poor Lady Evelyn is likely to make for the benefit of posterity !—Now if you had married Frances Hope, as last season we all expected you would (as we were all agreeing at Queen's Clere t'other day), you might have expected a race like the sons and daughters of Anak.—Frances is five feet eight, and Lady Hester says she has not done growing.”

“ I have no partiality for giantesses !” said Lord Fareham, with disgust.—And he was luckily spared the annoyance of further familiarity on the part of his officious companion, by their arrival, at that moment, at the door of the brilliantly-lighted hotel.

It was no unusual spectacle to the waiters

to find the attempts of Mr. Harbottle Driftington to fix himself as a guest, even at that late hour, upon one of their noble inmates, repulsed on the present occasion by the haughty coldness of Lord Fareham.

CHAPTER VII.

I stalk about her door,
Like a strange soul, upon the Stygian banks,
Praying for waftage.

SHAKSPEARE.

LITTLE had Lord Fareham supposed he should ever cross the threshold of Lord Clantullin with so sickening a heart as chanced on the morrow ; when about to present himself, arrayed in all the consciousness of shame, before her whose superiority even to the high rank he was able to offer her, he had ever admitted. Yes, his Evelyn was worthy to be a monarch's bride ; and he was about to bestow upon her the endearments of a beggar's changeling ! But that he knew her to be in deep affliction,

and awaiting his presence as the sole consolation of her grief, he would not, at that moment, have found courage to proceed into her presence.

As it was, his manner was so embarrassed, his greeting so unlike his usual passionate tenderness, that, had not Lady Evelyn Lorn been pre-absorbed in miseries of her own, she would have been startled. Even troubled as she was, the colour rose to her cheek, on finding that, instead of the affectionate salute which, in her father's presence, usually attended their greetings, Lord Fareham was contented to take her hand. He held it, however, for one or two minutes, in silence,—gazing the while in speechless tenderness upon her sweet face; and his voice faltered with emotion, when at length he led her to the sofa, whispering, as he took his place by her side :

“ You sent for me, dearest? I did not lose a moment in obeying your summons. I was grieved to learn, last night, in answer to my message, that poor Mary is no better !”

"Much worse!" replied Lady Evelyn, in the same low and faltering tone. "My poor sister has lost all appetite, and her rest is sadly broken. She can scarcely be said to sleep. Last night, she was first to hear your name mentioned in the hall ; and late as it was, instantly sent down Mrs. Harman to inquire whether you were arrived."

"She will let me see her by and by, I trust?"—he inquired, resuming his hold of Lady Evelyn's small white hand, and looking anxiously into her face, to ascertain whether she had not suffered, in her turn, from the restlessness of the invalid. "You are looking pale, my own Evelyn!" said he, scarcely able to preserve the distance his conscience imposed upon him. "You are ill, darling ; you tremble!"

"Only with the joy of seeing you again," she faintly replied. "You know not what it is to bear alone the sorrow of which the heavy burthen has been hitherto shared by a friend."

A tender pressure of the hand, encouraged the further observation of—

“I was *so* afraid Lord Arlingham would be unable to spare you from home, with the house full of company!”

“The party was breaking up when your letter arrived. But even had it been otherwise, could you suppose I should have hesitated an instant to comply with your wishes?”

Still, if Lord Fareham’s words were fond, the embarrassment of his manner did not escape the vigilant eye of affection; and though prepared, for reasons yet unexplained, to receive him with less than her usual fervour, Lady Evelyn experienced the mortification which every woman experiences under similar circumstances, of being forestalled in a purposed demonstration of coolness. The paleness and tremor which Lord Fareham had noticed on entering the room, were only the more painfully increased by this consideration.

“How is Lord Clantullin? Is he at

home?" inquired the young man, for the first time desirous of any interruption to a *tête-à-tête* with the object of his affection.

"My father is, as you may suppose, sadly low. His hopes had been so cruelly raised by the physicians, as to the advantage likely to be derived from change of air by my poor sister!"

"I do not think, however, he was ever very sanguine."

"He is just now sitting with Mary, and reading to her," observed Lady Evelyn. "As soon as this is over, I will let them know you are here."

"But you mentioned in your letter that you had much to say to me?"—observed Lord Fareham, as if to remonstrate against a proposal which, nevertheless, originated with himself.

"I have, dearest!" she replied, mechanically withdrawing her hand; "*too* much to enter into the explanation just now. It is always time enough to—that is—in short, I would rather defer what I have to communicate till I am

secure of an hour with you uninterrupted by my father or a summons from Mary. You are not, I trust, obliged to leave Brighton immediately?"—

"No! Lord Arlingham is in town, and does not at present want me," he replied; "nor shall I think of quitting you if I find you have any immediate cause for uneasiness on Mary's account."

Lady Evelyn gazed at him a moment, as if surprised; the next, she rose from her seat, and approaching the table, busied herself with the removal of some books, as if by way of pretext for a change of place; for when she again seated herself, it was in an arm chair beside the fire-place, at some distance from the sofa.

Following the line of conduct he had traced out for himself, Lord Fareham, though surprised and mortified, submitted without remark, and soon afterwards took up his own place on the hearth-rug, and began to talk of things comparatively indifferent; of the circle he had quitted

at Fareham Castle, of his journey and the weather ; and, above all, of the nuisance of having accidentally placed himself under the same roof with Mr. Harbottle Driftington.

“ I foresee that I shall never have a moment to myself, so long as I remain at Brighton ! That man’s eye will be constantly upon me ! ” said he, peevishly.

“ A sad annoyance, I admit,” said Lady Evelyn, in an absent and careless manner. “ But after all, it does not much signify : it is only a minor evil.”

Lord Fareham shrugged his shoulders. He was not accustomed to hear her treat as a minor evil any personal annoyance of which he saw fit to complain. Involuntarily, he fixed his eyes upon that gentle face and graceful form ; —the loveliness of which had never struck him more forcibly than at that moment, when he contemplated it as lost to him for ever.—In her closely-wrapping black velvet dress, the well-turned throat of Lady Evelyn

looked white as alabaster ; and but for the lifelike gloss of the long chesnut ringlets that fell over the white hand on which her cheek was propped, while her elbow rested on the cushioned arm of the chair, she might have passed for a monumental statue. She was not apt to be so pale. But long confinement in a sick room seemed to be working its usual evil consequences.

His heart yearned towards her as he gazed. His first and only love was before him ; she whom he had chosen from the world ; she who had rejoiced to be so chosen. Yet he dared not snatch his plighted wife to his heart, and whisper the question that can never be asked or answered too often by those who love—"are you mine only, and mine for ever?"

As this embarrassing position was becoming intolerable to Lord Fareham, a heavy step was heard rapidly descending the staircase ; and when it approached the drawing-room door, (as audibly as the slight nature of Brighton architecture renders all the movements of the inmates of

its houses), he flattered himself that the arrival of Lord Clantullin was about to relieve them.

But the step passed on to the hall. A moment afterwards, and the house-door was opened and closed; when Lady Evelyn, glancing from the window to the pavement, exclaimed with an air of surprise, “My father gone out so early?—How strange that he should have left the house without seeing you!”

If Lord Fareham thought so too, he disguised his sentiments by an eager inquiry of whether they could not *now* be admitted to see Lady Mary.

“I will tell her you are here,” replied Lady Evelyn, hurrying from the room; and no sooner was the lover alone, than he gave way to growing feelings of surprise and uneasiness at all that was passing.

The summons he had received to Brighton,—the hesitation of Evelyn, now that he was come

to explain the motives of her request,—the *génie* of her deportment,—the evident avoidance of Lord Clantullin—what could all this mean? Was it possible that any rumours of the mystery enveloping his birth should have reached their ears?—Had De Lisle, on whose word he was beginning to place but faint reliance,—doubly betrayed him?

But no! there could be no object in such treachery; and what other channel existed through which that terrible secret could transpire?—He must look elsewhere for the origin of all that startled him in the altered manner of Lady Evelyn.—And he had ample leisure for the examination; for, instead of returning immediately with a reply to his request for an audience of Lady Mary, her absence was strangely prolonged.

Five minutes—twenty—thirty—served to stimulate his anxious fears. For what purpose was she thus sporting with his feelings? What could detain her? Were her sentiments so

cooled towards him, that she had no sympathy with the uneasiness she must be certain of having created in his mind?—

“I feel how it is with me!” muttered Lord Fareham, as he paced the room in uncontrollable impatience. “All these unnatural misgivings—these tremors never felt before—arise from the consciousness of standing in presence of my future wife as a vile impostor! Knowing as I do the candour and equity of dearest Evelyn’s character, I am sensible of my own unworthiness in not honestly apprizing her,—as one so nearly a part of myself ought instantly to be apprized,—of the loss of what I once esteemed my Birthright.—When she knows all, I shall be content!—Even the certainty that the beggar’s son must forfeit the rich treasure of her affection, would be less painful to bear, than the consciousness of deceiving a heart so true. I have *not* pledged myself to De Lisle to be a villain to *her*!—Enough, that I submit to impose upon Lord Arlingham. To Evelyn,

my precious noble Evelyn—I *must* and *will* reveal the truth!"

And having taken this manly resolution, he raised his head again; in the secret conviction, that his candour would be rewarded by finding the exalted being on whom his affections were lavished, unmoved in her sentiments towards him by his cruel change of fortunes. His mind was comparatively at ease, after having found courage to face the worst.

"The moment in which she consents to be still mine—mine for my single sake and for the love she bears me," mused he, almost aloud, "will richly compensate for all I have suffered or may have to suffer!"

At that moment, the door was slowly opened, and Lady Evelyn re-entered the room; not with the step of youthful elasticity with which she was accustomed to hasten into the presence of the object of her love;—not with the beaming looks which even her grief for her sister's afflictions was not able to sadden when gazing

upon his face ; but with faltering steps, and tearful eyes—her cheeks still paler than during their recent interview. Lord Fareham fancied he perceived a slight odour of ether as she entered the room, as though she had been assisting in recovering the invalid from some crisis of exhaustion.

“ Mary is worse, I fear. What, what has happened ?”—cried he, perceiving that Lady Evelyn was scarcely able to reach a seat.

“ Nothing has happened,” she replied, in a low, but firm voice. “ My sister is not worse ; but she is not equal to the interview you proposed.”

“ This afternoon, perhaps ?”

“ You will permit me, therefore,” resumed Lady Evelyn, not noticing his interruption, “ to profit by my father’s absence and Mary’s desire to be alone, in order to—in order—”

“ In order,” interrupted Lord Fareham, perceiving that her firmness was gradually forsaking her, and that she was scarcely able to arti-

culate, “to explain to me the motive of my presence here.—Is it not so, Evelyn?”

For a moment, she remained silent; then, more firmly than he had anticipated, simply reiterated his words,

“Yes! to explain to you the motive of my request for your presence here.”

Though her look seemed almost to invite him to take his usual place by her side, Lord Fareham, with feelings of growing mistrust, stood aloof. Yet it was only too easy to perceive, from the unusual faintness of her tone, that she might experience some difficulty in making herself audible at the distance he chose to preserve between them.

“I have that to say to you,” she resumed, gathering strength from his ungraciousness, “which must be grievous to us both;—painful to *you* to hear, as to myself to utter. But you must find courage, Henry—you must find courage, as I have done.”

Lord Fareham looked wistfully towards the

seat, from which he made up his mind to refrain. He was not accustomed to keep aloof when Evelyn looked unhappy. Still, a secret terror kept him firm to his estrangement.

"Since I saw you last," resumed Lady Evelyn, as if she had nerved herself to avow the worst, and avoid all further circumlocution, "circumstances have come to my knowledge, which render our union impossible. Had they transpired earlier in our acquaintance, much misery might have been spared me; but to prolong our engagement, with the certainty that our marriage would be a source of— Forgive me, I cannot dwell upon this! Spare me, Henry! You cannot but suspect to what I allude. Since the terrible secret became known to me, I have not experienced a moment's peace! But, alas! there remains but one step to take.—We must part!"

"You have judged wisely. I will not pretend to misunderstand you," said he, coldly. —"Our union is, indeed, impossible!"

"Then why not, with this conviction, forestal the rupture to which you have compelled me?"—cried Lady Evelyn. "Why leave to *me* the odium of an act that would have proceeded with a far better grace from yourself?"—

"On my honour—on my salvation,"—exclaimed Lord Fareham, as though the former word were no longer appropriate to his condition, "not a fortnight has elapsed since, for the first time, I entertained a suspicion of the truth. I determined, when I entered this house to-day, not to leave it till I had revealed all to yourself. A faint hope brightened my wretchedness, that you might still, in spite of all— But, no matter! You have decided wisely, and well. There remains for me only to entreat your forgiveness for having unwittingly, under such circumstances, degraded you by pretending to your hand."

"If you were yourself without suspicion of the truth," murmured Lady Evelyn, tears slowly rolling over her cheeks, "I acquit you. It

will be something in the estrangement about to arise between us, that I am able to preserve my esteem for one I had hoped to—”

She paused, and laid her hand a moment upon her heart, as if to tranquillize its struggles.

“I thank you!” was the proud reply of Lord Fareham, “though I might, perhaps, claim as a right, what you seem disposed to accord as a concession. In all this, it is I, Evelyn—I, alone who am to be pitied. When you have cast me off, your prospects in life will remain uninjured: no one will blame or despise *you*. Others more fortunate than myself, will pretend to your hand, and eventually obtain your heart—effacing all trace of your early entanglement. You will be happy, prosperous, beloved; while I shall retain only the embittering recollection of the facility with which, on making the cruel discovery, you were able to dismiss me from your regard.”

“You judge me ungenerously;” cried Lady

Evelyn, trembling in every limb. "If I have suppressed my feelings of agony in order to spare your own, the greatness of the effort is only to be appreciated by myself! I thought you more generous. I fancied you would be able to appreciate my sacrifice."

A knock at the door interrupted her; a knock, which long experience enabled them both to recognize as that of Lord Clantullin. Rain had come on, unperceived by the absorbed pair; and the old man was driven home again in a fly, from the walk with which he had intended to refresh himself after the confinement of the sick room.

"How unfortunate; it is my father!" said Lady Evelyn, hastily rising. "He must not find me thus agitated. He has not, at present, the remotest suspicion of this terrible discovery."

"The decision you have formed against me, then, is wholly and solely your own?"—demanded Lord Fareham, who had fondly attributed the sternness of purpose with which Evelyn

was dealing with him, to the worldly wisdom of the Earl.

"It is essential to the happiness of us all," replied Lady Evelyn, hurriedly, without even noticing the insinuation, "that he should be kept in ignorance of the truth. At some future time, if my hopes prosper, we may tell him all. At present, I entreat you, Henry,—entreat you by all the affection you have ever professed towards me,—delay the intimation of this rupture."

"How is it to be done without declaring the whole bitter truth to Lord Clantullin?" cried Lord Fareham, struggling for utterance.

"Oh, no—no!—not for worlds;" cried she, starting up, and placing her cold white hands beseechingly on his arm, till, in the bitterness of his soul, Lord Fareham flung them off with disgust.

"My father is coming up stairs! There is not a moment for hesitation;" exclaimed Lady Evelyn, disregarding his resentful cruelty, in the earnestness of her purpose. "All I ask you

is to say nothing to him now, and to offer no opposition to the explanations I shall make after your departure from Brighton ; for you must not remain here. Compelled as I have been to precipitate the explanation between us, at this last moment I cannot be more explicit. When you are far from hence, I will apprise my father that, by mutual consent, our engagement is dissolved ;—that, on a nearer acquaintance, our tempers proved incompatible.”—

Lord Fareham was about to express his indignation that so shallow a plea was likely to satisfy her family, to whom he had ever believed her warm attachment for him a matter of conviction. But at that moment, the kind-hearted old Earl broke into the room, overjoyed to see him, and having manifestly only that moment learned his arrival.

“ My dear Fareham, how are you ? ” cried he. “ This is indeed an unexpected pleasure. Will you believe it that those stupid fellows below let me quit the house, just now, without apprizing me

you were here? If it had not happened to rain, I might have missed seeing you till dinner time!" said he, cordially shaking the hand of his intended son-in-law, which he held, while speaking, between his own.

"I had not the least notion of your being able to give us a glimpse of you again!" he resumed, finding Lord Fareham make no reply. "It was very kind of your father to spare you to us so soon.—How does Arlingham find himself, pray, after all his recent holiday-making?"—

The old man paused for a reply. But no reply was forthcoming. Neither his daughter nor his guest could utter a syllable. A glance from one to the other revealed them to the Earl as they stood before him, the one with swollen eyelids and despairing countenance, the other still more deeply affected.

"Ah! I see what you were talking of, when I came in!" cried he.—"Poor Evelyn has been telling you, my dear Fareham, of the

late unfavourable change, and that the physicians have taken away the little hope left us. Poor dear child,—poor blessed Mary!—I was reading to her for an hour before I went out; but I fear she was almost too weak and too miserable to find pleasure in listening.—Have you been up to see her, Fareham?”

“ My sister expressed a wish to sleep,” replied Lady Evelyn, interposing. “ She is certainly less well to-day.”

“ And *you* too, my poor dear girl; you are making yourself ill in your turn,” faltered the Earl, drawing her fondly towards him, and fixing his eyes on her tear-stained cheeks. “ Just see, Fareham, to what a state of nervousness she has reduced herself by nursing! —I cannot bear this, Evelyn!—I must not have to part from both my children.—Remonstrate with her!—She will mind *you*. Tell her that, at this rate, she will seriously injure herself, and break both our hearts!”

Tears were in the eyes of the old Lord,

as he drew his daughter still closer towards him, and imprinted a solemn kiss upon her forehead.

At that moment, Lady Evelyn Lorn glanced towards the unhappy young man, (who was already beginning to regard her with the cold contempt due to the promptitude of her worldly-minded discretion), with such a look of despair at her own wretchedness, and of entreaty that he would spare the feelings of her father, that Lord Fareham had not courage to persist in his project of announcing his instant departure from Brighton.

He even submitted, in compliance with her hint, to allow the Earl to expect him at dinner ;—to be cross-questioned concerning his journey,—concerning Lord Arlingham's plans for the opening parliamentary campaign ; and though his replies were sufficiently incoherent to have startled any one whose mind was not absorbed by the mortal illness of a beloved daughter, it needed all the force of poor Evelyn's

beseeching glances, to enable him to maintain even this moderate show of composure.

“ Your father, my dear Fareham, is enjoying a triumph that would turn any head less admirably organised than his own ! ” said Lord Clantullin, wholly unconscious of all that was passing before him. “ Gad ! if I had spirits just now to envy any human being, I really think it would be my friend Arlingham ! But I always predicted some great *coup d'état* of your father.”

The name thus reiterated, seemed to sear the ears of Lord Fareham as with burning iron. His downcast looks steadily evaded those of Lady Evelyn.—Yet even though he met not her eyes, he fancied he could *feel* them fixed with withering contempt upon the supposititious son of the Earl of Arlingham.

The blood rushed to his temples. He felt that, if he stood much longer there before them, in that false position, he should expire of shame before their eyes.

Pretending, with sudden recollection, that a friend was waiting for him at the hotel with whom he had to keep an appointment, he prepared to quit the room.

"Well, well! If you must go, you *must*!" cried Lord Clantullin. "I suppose Evelyn has told you that we dine at six?—I would say bring your friend with you, (as all your friends will be ever welcome to me),—but that poor Mary's condition renders the company of even a single stranger, insupportable.—Who is it?"

Startled by this unexpected apostrophe from one entitled to ask him the most familiar questions, Lord Fareham stood irresolute. A glimpse of Lady Evelyn's anxious face gave him spirit to collect his thoughts.

"Mr. Harbottle Driftington, is staying at my hotel," said he, evasively, "and several other men of my acquaintance. Perhaps it would be better if I joined them at dinner;—as you and Lady Evelyn must be so much worn out with watching?"

“ *Worn out*, indeed?—Are you not one of ourselves?” cried the kind old man; and in his solicitude to ascertain, ere he permitted his son-in-law’s departure, whether the rain had ceased,—whether the pavement were dry,—and above all, whether Lord Fareham had an umbrella, he fortunately lost sight of the expressive countenances before him, in both of which, despair was unconcealably depicted.

As Lord Fareham closed the door after him on quitting the room, poor Evelyn sank into her seat in a state of utter exhaustion. But it was only natural for Lord Clantullin to attribute her suffering condition to the effects of anxious attendance upon the couch of her dying sister!

So truly do we judge of each others’ feelings, among the deceptions of this world!—

CHAPTER VIII.

There where I had garner'd up my heart,
Where either I must live, or bear no life ;
The fountain from the which my current runs,
Or else dries up—*to be discarded thence !*

SHAKSPEARE.

TEN days elapsed after the wretched visit of Lord Fareham to Brighton ; and all he had yet effected towards the completion of his intentions, was to entreat by letter from Lady Evelyn a few weeks' delay in the explanations still to be made to her father.—He asked it coldly and haughtily, indeed, but in such terms as to render non-compliance impossible. For the breach between them, when revealed to Lord Arlingham by the Earl of Clantullin, (who was far from likely to be satisfied with the shallow pretext they had mutually devised),

could not fail to provoke inquiries on the part of his father, such as, without self-betrayal, Lord Fareham felt it would be impossible for him to answer.

He was still, therefore, tossed on a sea of troubles ;—still perplexed, as well as miserable ;—still conscious, that the commonest comforts he enjoyed, were enjoyed at unlawful cost ;—and above all, still sinking hourly lower and lower in his own estimation, as he reflected on his vain over-estimate of Evelyn's affection.

All else he would have borne. But the ease with which she had resigned him !—Scarcely a pang, scarcely a tear !—She had talked of emotions, indeed, and uttered a few commonplace expressions of regret.—But to what did the fact amount ?—That she had allotted half an hour to the explanation which was to precipitate the man of her choice from the height of human happiness, into the utmost depths of despair !—She had discarded him as coolly as she would have discarded an upper servant !

—All her anxiety had been to get him as speedily as possible out of the house ; as though she could not too eagerly shake off the contamination she had unwittingly contracted by affiance with an inferior.—Oh ! in the secrecy and bitterness of his soul, what blasphemies did he not utter against the vileness of that calumniated sex, which devotes itself, in life and death, only that its devotion may be derided by the worldly-minded, and mistrusted by all the rest !—

Unwilling to expose himself to the cross-questioning of Lord Arlingham touching the motive of his sudden journey to Brighton, and as sudden return, instead of proceeding to London, or harassing himself by a visit to some country house, (of all species of private life the most public and most fatiguing), he pursued his way along the coast to the Isle of Wight ; as if for the perverse purpose of visiting its enchanting scenery at the least advantageous moment of the year.—He had frequently been there before,

in the height of the yachting season, when all was sunshine, movement, and social refinement; and the change to its present cheerless winter aspect, resembled only too revoltingly the vicissitudes of his destinies.—There was something congenial with the present morose condition of his temper in those leafless woods,—those disjointed chines,—those reefs, so fatal to the fortunes of the mariner.

The solitary shores along which he pursued his way, accompanied only by the cry of the sea-birds circling from the cliffs above, enabled him to enjoy, to the utmost, the despair which was becoming a portion of himself.

Longer, perhaps, would he have kept aloof from the importunities of social converse, but that every day suggested itself as one of the last numbered unto him for the enjoyment, *not* of his undue splendours and worldly ascendancy, but of Lord Arlingham's society.

“A few weeks more,” mused he, “and, even should he still continue to me the concession

of his esteem, how different will be our relative position!—Painful as it is to me *now* to stand in his presence, how far more painful to yearn after it, without the privilege of seeking it again!—When once discarded from his house, and alienated from him for ever, how precious will appear every moment of the time I might have spent in his company!—How shall I long for his opinions,—his instructions,—nay, the very sound of his beloved voice!—Dearly as I used to prize every moment enjoyed by the side of Evelyn, I now feel how insufficiently—how very insufficiently, I valued at the time my precious privilege!—Yet, Evelyn has treated me with recklessness and scorn;—Evelyn, I have learnt to despise;—while Lord Arlingham will never, I am convinced, merit any other feeling at my hands, than the deference which not even the familiarity of father and son was ever able to diminish.”

Next day, he was in London; undergoing all the torture of a thousand anxious inquiries

from the Earl touching the state of health which could have produced so strange an alteration in his looks. As, however, according to the terms of his agreement with Lady Evelyn, no hint was at present to be afforded of the rupture of their engagement, he allowed Lord Arlingham to infer that he had been spending his time at Brighton ; where the miserable contemplation of the dying sister of his affianced wife, an exquisitely beautiful girl fading in the full bloom of youth, afforded a natural pretext for his loss of spirits.

Nor was it difficult, just then, to distract the Earl's attention from the state of his looks. In the interim of his absence, parliament had met ; and Lord Arlingham was luxuriating in all the excitement of triumph from having met it with the command of a powerful majority.—All was well with him. Auspicious news had arrived from the only quarter, which had tended to overcloud the lustre of his foreign policy ; and Lord Fareham had to listen to his self-gratula-

tions at being able to introduce his beloved son into public life at a crisis so honourable to the names and prospects of both. For, accustomed to the summary mode in which his illustrious colleague was apt to dispose of the opinions and intentions of his juniors, it did not occur to the Earl as possible, that Lord Fareham should meditate any further opposition to their common projects in his favour.

The day following his arrival in town, however, they dined together at a grand party-gathering, at the Duke of Hythe's; in which, as an active and fluent adherent, Mr. Harbottle Driftington was included. It was the least his Grace could do, in gratitude for the zeal with which he had been running hither and thither, praising the wisdom of the Coalition, and chaunting pæans in his honour.

Such parties were at all times distasteful to Lord Fareham. There was something of “shop” in them,—something ungenial and unreal,—which he was averse to encounter among

the humanities of social life. But on the present occasion, he was glad of any thing that forced him out of himself and away from home.

This feeling did not last, however, when he found himself placed at table opposite to Driftington, and side by side with Lord Thomas Aymer; the hoaxing of the latter, and the restless curiosity of the former, being a serious calamity to a man labouring under mental depression.

"By the way, my dear Fareham," cried Driftington, by way of marking his familiarity with Lord Arlington's son, almost before the party were seated at table, "what a slippery trick you played us all the other day at Brighton! Why, you were not *there* four and twenty hours! And really, to give poor Lord Clantullin the slip in the way you did! The good old man was down at the hotel within half an hour after you started, inquiring of all and sundry, what had become of you; whether you had been summoned express back

to town, or had embarked for France? It seemed really a comfort to him when I was able exactly to inform him what road you had taken, and that you had ordered your letters to be forwarded to Ryde."

" You were very kind to busy yourself so gratuitously about my affairs," said Lord Fareham, somewhat bitterly.

" But what is all this about?" interrupted Lord Thomas Aymer. " Why, Driftington, this is a second edition of your history, or mystery, about the Clarendon and the pocket-book! Do you really mean that the vagabond by my side has given that worthy man, the Earl of Clantullin, so much uneasiness?—Fie, fie, fie! Fareham!—running away from your wife before you are married?"

" Mr. Driftington exaggerates a very simple circumstance," replied Lord Fareham, dreading that Lord Arlingham might overhear. " I quitted Brighton a few hours earlier than I intended; and the note which was to have

conveyed to Lord Clantullin intelligence of my change of plans, appears to have been mislaid."

"But what the deuce took you to Ryde, of all places in the world, at this season of the year?" persisted Lord Thomas. "What sins have you been committing, to deserve such a penance?"

"*I* left Brighton only the day before yesterday," said Driftington, perceiving that, if Lord Thomas paused for a reply, Lord Fareham also paused about making it,—"*and called at Lord Clantullin's to know if they had any letter or message for you.*"

"Because you supposed him to be at Ryde?" interrupted Lord Thomas, with a laugh.

"No,—because *I knew* him to be in town. My friend, Dick Barton, who is aide-de-camp at Portsmouth, wrote me word, a few days ago, he had seen you stepping out of the Ryde packet," continued he, addressing the discomfitted Lord Fareham.

"By Jove, Driftington, *your* correspondences beat those of old Solomon in the Stranger!" cried Lord Thomas. "I *do* believe you keep up an overland mail with Timbuctoo, and start a private steamer for Van Dieman's Land!—How on earth can you find time for your universal post-bag?"

"Or interest for all the rubbish it seems to contain?"—added Lord Fareham, bitterly.

"What is this, Fareham, about a tour in the Isle of Wight?"—demanded Lord Arlingham, whom the conversation was gradually reaching.

"Only, my Lord, that your hopeful son has been playing truant from Brighton; and that poor Driftington was the bell-man employed by Lord Clantullin's family to go round and cry him!" said Lord Thomas, coolly.

"Cry *for* him, you mean!" said Driftington, without perceiving the ridicule he was attaching to himself. "I can assure you they were seriously uneasy till I was able to acquaint them with his whereabouts."

"I was afraid poor Clantullin had too much to be seriously uneasy about in Lady Mary's health," observed Lord Arlingham, gravely, "to leave him much leisure for lesser cares. But by the way, Fareham, this little caprice of yours accounts for De Lisle's writing to me the other day for your address, and complaining that some letter of his had been opened and returned to him from Brighton, because you left a wrong address at your hotel."

"How very strange they should have opened it, instead of applying to *me*!" cried Drifftington, so eagerly, that it instantly occurred to Lord Fareham he had some hand in advising the measure.

"I answered Sir James De Lisle," said Lord Arlingham, "that there must have been some strange mistake; but that I was expecting you daily home from Clantullin's, and that he had better re-inclose his letter to my house. Instead of re-inclosing it, he called a couple of days ago, and left it. I have to thank Mr.

Harbottle Driftington for recalling the matter to my mind ; for, to own the truth, it had escaped my recollection.”

“ It is not often poor Driftington is so civilly thanked for his interference !” observed Lord Thomas, laughing.

“ I met De Lisle this afternoon in St. James’s Street,”—observed Driftington (not choosing to hear)—“ accompanied by a young man I never saw before—some country neighbour, I suppose ; or, more probably, some near relation—for there was a decided resemblance between them.”

“ A son of Sir James’s, for a thousand ! I have heard that, for as precise as he is, he was a sad *roué* in his youth !” observed Lord Thomas. “ *There*, Driftington ! I have given you a famous clue to follow up—a capital piece of mischief to unravel ! Pray, how old was the genteel youth that De Lisle was chaperoning ?”—

“ About Fareham’s age—but by no means like him. The young man had more of Lord

Arlingham's countenance. There is some relationship, if I recollect, between the families?"—

"None that will assist the fabrication of your scandal; for it is on the side of Fareham's mother, not of his father," said Lord Thomas, little suspecting the annoyance inflicted on his neighbour by every idle word he was uttering. But for the solemn assurance given him by Sir James De Lisle of the death of the sickly infant of Lord Arlingham, Lord Fareham's anxiety and suspicions would indeed have been strongly excited by the circumstance related. And yet, how was he to pin his faith upon *any* assurance uttered by De Lisle? How could he confide in the word of a man who, for more than twenty years past, had been hourly conning in an imposture?

"How glad you must have been, my dear Fareham," observed Drifington, selecting another agreeable topic for his frivolous gossip, "to hear of this wonderful amendment in Lady Mary Lorn! I know not what miracle was

accomplished by your visit to Brighton ; but certain it is, that, ever since, Hopwig has given Lord Clantullin hopes of her ultimate recovery. Hopwig, of course, fancies her Ladyship's improvement to have arisen from some horrible course of drugs of his prescribing. But whatever the cause of the change, it has not chanced too soon ; for, 'pon honour, the looks of Lady Evelyn were becoming quite alarming. In *your* place, my dear fellow, *I* certainly should not allow such close attendance ! — Pulmonary complaints are now so well-known to be contagious,—”

“ Hereditary, not contagious,” interrupted Lord Thomas. “ However, let us hope that neither of those lovely sisters have inherited the malady of her mother.”

“ The malady of their mother,” observed Lord Fareham, gravely, “ was grief for the loss of an only son.”

“ *That* could scarcely be the origin of Lady Mary Lorn’s disorder, I suppose?” observed Lord

Thomas, with a demure smile. “However, when people have the faculty of dying of grief, they are not supposed to be particular as to the *kind* of grief. The loss of a son, or brother, or lover, or even lap-dog, will do,—when nothing more afflicting is to be had.”

“It is scarcely fair of persons enjoying, like ourselves, robust health, to decide on the results of constitutional irritability in a delicate and nervous woman,” said Lord Fareham, evidently displeased. “Grandison, what news from Paris this afternoon?—I fancy the courier is arrived?”—

The under secretary, thus apostrophized, immediately afforded the wished-for interruption,—by reciting a *précis* of the concise-in-itself “*premier Paris*,” of the *Journal des Débats*.—The conversation immediately took a political turn.

That night, instead of accompanying the other young men of the party to the opera, to witness the evolutions of a *corps de ballet*

esteemed in London in proportion to its audacity of nakedness and powers of dislocation, he returned home;—sorely perplexed by learning that a confidential letter, addressed to him by Sir James De Lisle, had first been opened at Brighton, for the amusement of the waiters of an hotel, and afterwards passed into the hands of the Earl of Arlingham.

“ If he should still forget to give me the letter, I shall never find courage to ask him for it !” was his vexatious reflection. “ But, alas ! I have little need of haste to learn the contents. Sir James will take care to apprise me to-morrow of the arrival of my enemy and tormentor.”

On the morrow, however, he listened with superfluous anguish of spirit to every ring at the bell, or knock at the door. No Sir James made his appearance ; a forbearance explained on the following morning by an announcement in the newspapers, among the departures, of—“ Sir James De Lisle, from his house in Park Place, for the Isle of Wight.”

" You seem to have bitten all the world with your mania, my dear fellow!" cried Mr. Harbottle Driftington, officiously pointing out the words to him, as they sat lounging over the papers at the Carlton.—" See ! here is De Lisle already following your example ! Now, what on earth can take that stiff *routinier* old bachelor across the water, at this season of the year ?—*He* has no plighted wife, (that I know of), to quarrel with, and run away from."—

Without noticing the sneering inference, Lord Fareham could not help deducing evil auguries from the fact. He could entertain little doubt that De Lisle was gone in quest of him ; nor did it surprise him when, a few days afterwards, the newspapers again announced among the "fashionable changes," his arrival at Brighton from the Isle of Wight.

" His next remove will be to town," thought the young man ; " and then, all must be brought to an issue. Another week, and the time will have elapsed for which I pledged away my

free-will. No matter now, how soon the bubble bursts. The worst is over. After what I have borne, I shall learn to sustain—ay, sustain with patience,—even the pang of an eternal separation from my father.”

But though he thus attempted to cheer himself into courage, the days, as they went by, found him sinking and sinking. Involuntarily drawn in the train of Lord Arlingham into the vortex of political life, the deference conceded to him by the leading men of the day, in consequence of the flattering verdict upon his abilities pronounced by the uncompromising Duke of Hythe, was beginning to inspire him with an appetite for the distinctions of public life. Officialism is a vocation, like any other. The hankering after place exhibited by those to whom salary and perquisites form no object, sufficiently proves it: and as certain passions, like certain flowers, have their appointed hour for blowing, ambition now put forth its shoots in the soul of Lord Fareham, in spite

of all adversities of time and place. The hour was come for one reared and nurtured as he had been, to experience and avow profound interest in the fortunes of his native country.

It happened that, in spite of the accession of strength to government, insured by the Coalition, a great crisis was at that moment paralyzing the activity of the administration led by Lord Arlingham and the Duke of Hythe. The opposition was factious and insolent, the ministry harassed into rashness; nor could the nominal son, who had never felt more reverently and affectionately towards the Earl than at that trying moment, refrain from the most eager interest in every official conference that took place, or an earnest desire to become, in the face of the kingdom, the champion and partisan of him whose bold and manly policy exposed him to cruel misinterpretation. Even in the eyes of ministers, Lord Fareham was beginning to justify the warmth of applause lavished by the Duke of Hythe on his abilities, by the

logical force of argument with which, on more than one occasion, at the table of his Grace, or the Earl, he expounded and vindicated the vilified measures of the Coalition.

“ You are injuring us, my dear Arlingham, you are doing us a positive injury,” pleaded the Duke to his colleague, “ by not *compelling* that boy to take his seat, and serve us where good service is imminently wanted. We require the rejuvenization of a little vigorous blood infused into us. Next month, the Irish question comes before the house. We have no one to support it but such stale old hands as Glozingley, Rats-hill, Lynch, and Dregslly, all of whom have worn their wits thread-bare on the subject. *Their* minds have been turned inside out, as regards Ireland ; and their thrice-told tale makes no more impression on the house or the country, than the whirl of a smoke-jack !—Fareham, so truly in earnest, yet so free from the frothy fervour of enthusiasm, would work miracles in our favour.—Let me

hope you will enable him to give us the advantage of his abilities!"—

To refuse was impossible. Yet, after the startling shock of unexpected opposition on the part of his son, Lord Arlingham experienced the utmost reluctance to propose to him even the commonest concession. Hurt to the soul by finding his influence so much less than he supposed, delicacy forbade him to exercise his paternal authority, in matters where he had always preached free-will and liberty of conscience. On the present occasion, indeed, he stood committed both towards the Duke, and his son. He had promised Lord Fareham to leave him at liberty to act, provided he exhibited no opposition during the ministerial visit at Fareham Castle; yet had promised the Duke of Hythe that the support of his son should be forthcoming, when the hour of attack drew near!

Right welcome therefore, was it to Lord Arlingham, when, a few days afterwards, on

his way to Whitehall, he espied the travelling chariot of Sir James De Lisle, making its way into town.

For De Lisle as an individual, he had always experienced the sort of unavowed antipathy which a man is apt to cherish against the nearest male relative of his wife, when possessing her unlimited confidence. Such, however, had been the fond attachment between himself and the late Countess, that he had less to apprehend than most men, from conjugal complainings. But he knew that Sir James stood high in the esteem of his cousin; that they had been reared together as brother and sister; and that, on her death-bed, she had entreated the Baronet, in the event of her Henry becoming fatherless, to be his protector and guide. From all this, a certain degree of jealousy had arisen in the mind of the Earl, rendering the cold and watchful character of De Lisle doubly disagreeable to him. But situated as he now was with regard to his son, he resolved to turn to account

what had often annoyed him, by employing the influence of so near a kinsman in the office of mediation.

It chanced, therefore, that before the object of Sir James's visit to town had been accomplished in an interview with Lord Fareham, he was privately visited by the Earl, and canvassed for his vote and interest to modify what Lord Arlingham described as the waywardness of his son ; and determine him either promptly to take his place in the ministerial ranks, or throw down the gauntlet at once, and enable them to reckon him as friend or foe.

For De Lisle, this appeal created a wholly unexpected accession of strength, as regarded his personal authority over the young man whom it was his object to reduce to tame-ness and submission. From the line of conduct pursued towards him by Fareham, since their terrible explanation, he had reason to apprehend that the young Lord would, as long as possible, evade a private interview. But to

his great surprise, Lord Fareham, who, under the pressure of Lady Evelyn's desertion had become utterly desperate, was the first to seek him.

"I only heard last night from Driftington of your arrival in town," said he, on entering the drawing-room of Sir James, in Park Place, "or I should have waited upon you before. You doubtless desire to see me.—I am here."

"And most welcome!" exclaimed De Lisle, endeavouring to answer with the utmost cheerfulness. "I am *always* desirous to see you, my dearest Fareham; but, as you justly infer, especially so at the present moment."

The glance which passed between the two, while shaking hands, exhibited Lord Fareham to the man who thus warmly greeted him, so wasted in body, so feverish of aspect, that his wild eyes and parched lips sufficiently attested the sufferings he had undergone, since their last meeting; while Lord Fareham was almost startled by the triumphant air of De Lisle.

He seemed to have grown ten years younger. His hair was arranged with studied care; and his dress, heretofore precise and of the cut of a bygone day, had assumed a fashionable form. He appeared bent on demonstrating to the young man, whom he had recently announced as his heir, that he had no *immediate* prospect of inheritance!—

“ You have given me a wild-goose chase after you, my dear Henry,” resumed De Lisle. “ That officious ass, Drifftington, assured me you were gone to spend a month at the Isle of Wight. Having followed you thither with infructuous search, I thought it likely I should find you at no great distance from Clantulin’s.”

“ The papers informed me that you had visited Brighton,” said Lord Fareham, coldly.

“ I might, however, have spared myself the trouble of the journey, had you deigned to answer the letter I addressed to you there, a fortnight ago,” said De Lisle, good humoured-

ly. “ However, I am too happy to see you again, to find fault now.”

“ Thanks also to the interference of Driftington, the letter you mention never reached my hands,” replied Lord Fareham.

“ I have so far the less reason to repent my journey,” observed De Lisle, in a more confidential tone, “ that it served to apprise me of what I learned, with equal surprise and regret, that a coolness has arisen between yourself and Lady Evelyn Lorn.”

“ If you learned it from herself, the fact can have caused you little surprise!—” observed Lord Fareham, haughtily. “ Since she so far confided in you, as to relate what it was agreed between us should at present be kept sacred, even from her father, it is doubtless in requital of the still more important confidence you had previously reposed in herself.”

“ I do not understand you?—” said Sir James, mildly. “ From Lady Evelyn, I learned nothing. It was by poor Lady Mary—by the invalid,

(whose health by the way, has greatly improved within the last ten days), I was informed that, by mutual consent, the engagement between yourself and her sister was at an end."

" And did she not tell you *why*?—" abruptly demanded Lord Fareham.

" On the contrary, it was to me, as to your nearest relative, she addressed herself for information.—At present, she said, it appeared the desire of both parties to keep the rupture a secret from your families; and she found it impossible to extract from Lady Evelyn any reasonable motive for the sudden change of sentiments between you.—All her sister could be tempted to declare was that her own *were* changed;—that, though she had not ceased to esteem, she had ceased to love;—and that you fully coincided in her desire that your troth-plight should be set aside."

" And do *you* affect ignorance of the cause?—" inquired Lord Fareham, with bitterness.

" Entire ignorance.—It cannot be connected

with the secret which, according to your solemn pledge, still remains sacred between us?"

"It has not been divulged by *me*!"—observed Lord Fareham, coldly. "By what means it reached the ears of Lady Evelyn Lorn so as to forestall the poor self-satisfaction of avowal, I will as little pretend to guess, as the motives which could have suggested the information secretly imparted to her."

"If your accusation point at me," said Sir James, colouring to the temples, "I swear to you that, with the exception of your single self, not a syllable on the subject ever escaped my lips!"—

Lord Fareham was unable to repress a gesture of contemptuous incredulity.

"On my honour,—on my faith as a man,—as a *gentleman*," he repeated, (with an unintentional emphasis on the latter word, to which Lord Fareham instantly assigned an ungracious interpretation),—"I never breathed one word to her, or any other person. If you still

doubt me, Henry,—apply to Lady Evelyn for the solution of the mystery. Ask her whether I ever afforded a hint of what you declare her to have assigned as the motive of her desertion. But that you *do* declare it, I should state it to be impossible.—You know best.—Between persons situated as you have been with *her*, there can be no reserves. Let her vindicate herself and me by confessing the origin of her change of feeling!"

"There can be, and there needs no vindication!"—replied Fareham, in a hoarse voice.
"Enough that she has taught me the first of a thousand bitter lessons,—and that we have parted for ever!"

"If that be the case, and you submit with so good a grace to the separation," observed De Lisle, "I can only regard it as a matter for gratulation.—I confess it struck me before that there existed little real sympathy between your character, and that of Lady Evelyn. The Lorns are a cold race. Infirm, lymphatic, in-

dolent, either of those girls of Clantullin's, is little qualified to become the bride of a young enthusiast like yourself.—For both your sakes, Lady Evelyn has perhaps decided wisely.—But I have other and graver matters to treat upon. I come to you, Henry, as an ambassador from your father."

"From *Lord Arlingham?*—" said Lord Fareham, firmly, feeling that, from the lips of De Lisle, any other appellation was a mockery.

"Conscious, though without of course surmising why, that his personal influence with you is, in some degree, diminished—"

"It is *not* diminished!—" cried Lord Fareham. "Never did I regard him with sentiments of more respectful admiration than at this moment."

"Respectful admiration is not what he requires of his son. He asks obedience,—he asks affection."—

"Of my obedience, *who* has been the means of depriving him?" cried Lord Fareham, with

a glance of indignation. “ It is you, De Lisle, you, and only you, who have rendered it impossible for me to submit, on certain points, to his desires. He wishes me to embark, as the heir of his name and fortunes, in public life !”—

“ And why not ? ” coolly demanded Sir James. “ Even if you take the rash and unadvised step which is to deprive him of the comfort and happiness of his future life, what is there to prevent your repaying the happy hours you have dwelt under his roof, by supporting in parliament, with all the powers of your mind, the administration in which his honour and credit are embarked ? — Away with the boyish Quixotism, Henry, which, for the gratification of your own pride, would sharpen the edge of the weapon which is about to convey a deadly blow to Lord Arlingham !”—

The young man, so anxious to maintain a show of manly firmness in presence of his persecutor, was vexed to find his colour come and go, in utter self-betrayal. The arguments of Sir

James were unanswerable. There could not be a question, that the kindest course to pursue towards the minister who affixed a value to his services, was to devote himself to his party ; nay, to abstain from any hint or revelation that was likely to divert his mind from his responsible duties, at least till the close of the session.

“ Lord Arlingham sends me to you,” repeated Sir James, “ to entreat, as a favour, that which, at present, he supposes himself entitled to exact as a right. He wants you to take your seat within the next ten days ; and make your *début* in political life on the Irish question, some weeks hence. You cannot—you *must* not disappoint him. I take upon my own head the responsibility of the act, when eventually all is disclosed. Should any odium attach to your having accepted office as his son, I will boldly avow—to his face and that of the world,—the arguments by which I conquered your opposition.”

“ If I thought that a capacity so meagre as mine,—if I dared hope that my inexperience—my feebleness—” Lord Fareham was beginning.

“ Absurd !” interrupted Sir James. “ Examine of what materials the house is composed !—Observe the value they set upon even such men as Driftington, who have nothing beyond zeal and fluent plausibility to recommend them. How much more, then, upon yourself,—who are in earnest,—and who have vigour and cultivation of mind, to figure with honour in their cause. Let me consider this matter settled, Henry. Let me have the supreme satisfaction of conveying the cheering news to Lord Arlingham ?”

“ As I have already repeated to you,” observed Lord Fareham, reluctantly giving way, “ you have acquired the right of disposing of me as you please. Why, therefore, should I indulge in a peevish longing after independence? You well know that I am fettered, soul and body, to your footstool.”

" You have indulged to the utmost the suggestions of a morbid sensibility," resumed De Lisle, " by prematurely breaking off your matrimonial engagement. Be content ! Let this suffice you. When the unhappy moment arrives for a full explanation between Lord Clantullin and poor Arlingham—"

" My dear De Lisle, how are you ? So, so, so !—you have caught this unprincipled truant, at last !" cried the old-woman's-voice of Mr. Harbottle Drifftington, who now burst into the room. " I saw Fareham's cab at the door, and made my way up, whether your fellows would or no,—determined to have my share of the objurgation you are doubtless bestowing on him !"

De Lisle, who, having accomplished the object of his trying interview, was by no means sorry to have it interrupted, entered, with a readiness most provoking to Lord Fareham, into the bantering humour of the intruder. Walking towards the window, the young man

affected to turn a deaf ear to the conversation.

"I have not been a very hard task-master, as you may perceive," said he; "for, just as you came in, Fareham agreed to drive me to Berkeley Square, where I have business with his father."

"But what was that I heard you saying, as I came in," persisted Drifftington, with his usual familiar inquisitiveness, "about an explanation between Lord Clantullin and Lord Arlingham?—I hope the rumours I hear from Brighton are not correct?"—

"What rumours?—That there is going to be a new line of railroad established to Worthing?" inquired De Lisle, in order to give time to his agitated young friend to collect himself.

"No, no, no!—that the match is off betwixt Fareham and Lady Evelyn! I had a letter yesterday from Hopwig, containing—but no matter! The only thing likely to interest *you* in it, was his avowal of a suspicion that— But

you must know twice as much on the subject as Hopwig, my dear De Lisle?" cried Driftington, again interrupting himself; "you, who are just come from Brighton, and whom Hopwig states, in his letter, to be never out of Lord Clantullin's house?"

"Your friend, Mr. Hopwig's singular misrepresentations on this point, probably arise from the fact of my having thought it my duty to hint to my friend, Clantullin, the over-assiduity of his visits," observed De Lisle, obviously nettled.—"I am convinced that Lady Mary's illness arose from what produces half the indisposition of all English people,—namely, over-apothecarization. Perceiving that the little man was about to attempt the same system with Lady Evelyn (who is only over-fatigued by nursing her sister) I ventured to interfere."

"Is Lady Evelyn *really* ill?"—inquired Lord Fareham, in a tone of anxious surprise.

"Listen to the hypocrite, with his pretended sympathy for the ailments caused by his misde-

meanours !” cried Driftington, facetiously. “ Why, my dear fellow, don’t we all know how you behaved at Brighton,—driving the whole family out of their wits by your flightiness and inconsistency?—Moreover, I can tell you that some country neighbours of De Lisle’s arrived there before I left (a Sir Something-or-other Middleton and his lady) who, by the nature of their inquiries and interest in your welfare, gave us to understand you had been flirting abominably with their pretty little daughter!—eh, De Lisle?—Is it a true bill?—*Did* Fareham prove a recreant knight to the lovely Lady Evelyn, for the sake of little Middleton’s flaxen ringlets?”—

“ Have you been circulating this new fabrication through the town?—” cried Fareham, impatiently.

“ Not I!”— was the flippant reply of the busy-body.—“ I took upon myself the pleasanter task of consoling your Ariadne—that is, the Middleton Ariadne; (for it seems you are a double

traitor, and have twice deserted) leaving to Sir James the more responsible duty of making the agreeable to—”

“ My dear Fareham—we shall be late for your father ?” cried De Lisle, anxious perhaps lest some serious quarrel should ensue between his guests. “ Drifftington, I am afraid we must make no stranger of you, and turn you out.—We have an appointment with Lord Arlingham ; and *business* appointments are sacred.”

“ *Business* appointments !”—repeated Drifftington aloud, as he accompanied them down stairs, as one of the party. “ The report is *true*, then, which I heard to-day for the first time at the Athenæum, that Fareham is coming in for Cranwich ?—My dear fellow, I wish you joy ! You know how anxious I have always been that you should get into parliament !—You know how steadily I have always predicted that you would make a *figure* in parliament.”—

“ At present, my dear Drifftington, I wish you would allow him to figure in his own cab, as we

happen to be in haste!"— interrupted De Lisle, quietly placing him aside. "He shall answer your innumerable questions the first leisure day after delivering his maiden speech."

And forthwith, leaving Harbottle Driftington, still nodding, smiling, and chattering on the doorsteps in the teeth of an easterly wind,— away trotted Lord Fareham's fine cab-horse towards St. James's Street on his way to Berkeley Square, as if the load of care it was conveying were but of feather-weight.

CHAPTER VIII.

Give not me counsel,
Nor let no comforter delight my ear,
But such a one whose wrongs do suit with mine.
Bring me a father that so loved his child,
Whose joy in him is overwhelmed like mine,
And bid him speak of patience.

SHAKSPEARE.

BEFORE the close of the month, the clubs of London were ringing with applauses of the maiden speech of the minister's son. A maiden speech, like a maiden's nay, is apt to be mistrusted by the bitter sceptics of the world. On the present occasion, however, the steadiness and good sense of the speaker, were too well-known to his party to admit of any fear that the effort might prove a momentary inspi-

ration, or the got-up essay of a pains-taking student. It was plain to be seen, that the newly-launched vessel was a three-decker.

The joy of Lord Arlingham, though as prudently controlled as became a man of thirty years' experience in official life, was deep and heartfelt. The only son of his mother who is a widow, is often not dearer to her heart, than the only son of the widower, to his paternal pride ; and Lord Fareham was truly, as asserted by De Lisle, an object of adoration to the Earl.

Through life, he had afforded the sole solace to the cares of his Lordship's official life. Public men are apt to seek in the pleasures of hospitality or delights of literature, a resource against the thwartings of their harassing career. But the comfort of Lord Arlingham had been in his son ; and the blossoming of an aloe to the poor gardener who has tended its barrenness all the years of his life, affords not a more crowning compensation, than the moment when hundreds, hurrying from the House which *he* had

not found courage to enter during the attempt of his son, apprized him that a new patriot was born to his country ;—a far greater triumph than when milder voices apprized him, three and twenty years before, that a son was born to himself.

The meeting between them, when the lapse of a few hours brought them together again in Berkeley Square, was manly and affecting. Neither of them hazarded the smallest allusion to the event of the day. But the hearts of both were full,—that of the Earl with joy and pride,—that of Lord Fareham with grief and humiliation ; and the result was the same in both instances,—namely, a silent pressure of the hand, followed by incoherent allusions in a husky voice to subjects of general interest, or rather, of no interest at all.

The following day, however, Lord Fareham had the satisfaction of learning from Sir James De Lisle, by whom he had been carefully drilled through his initiatory duties in the House,

that the satisfaction of the Earl knew no bounds.

“I was almost afraid for his self-possession, while receiving the congratulations of his colleagues on your triumph,”— said he. “But with *them* he was of course on his guard.—It was only on finding himself alone with *me* (of whose sympathy, as your nearest friend, he was secure) that his feelings found vent in tears. Yes, my dear Henry!—the man, so taxed by the opposition press with hardness and insensibility, shed tears while dwelling upon the honours you were about to attach to his ancestral name.”

“And what were *your* feelings at that moment?” was the stern rejoinder of Lord Fareham.

“Far from painful, I assure you. I saw before me a great and good man, who, thanks to my interposition, however lawless and unauthorised, has enjoyed twenty years of happiness, withheld by the hand of Providence; and who,

if you were governed by me, might go to the grave, still happy, because still deceived."

Lord Fareham gravely shook his head.

"I have consented to a postponement of our *éclaircissement*," said he. "Do not expect my weakness to concede more."

"I expect your *strength* to concede more," persisted Sir James. "The best proof we can give of greatness of mind, is to rise superior to our human position. Surmount the influence of yours—rise to the level of the fortunes you have accidentally attained!"—

"And wrong the lawful heir of the Arlingham title and estates?"—

"Do you suppose that the Earl, setting all tie of kindred aside, would a moment hesitate, were it in his power to select an heir, between yourself and a cousin he despises like Sir George Strickland?"—

"I will not attempt an answer to such casuistry!" replied the young man, coldly. "Truth is, in my opinion, the attribute by

which we approach nearest to the Divinity ; and since my acquiescence in the system of fraud in which I have been reluctantly involved, I have sunk so low in my own esteem, that life has become a burthen to me. What must Evelyn Lorn think of my proceedings ?—Has not my conduct fully justified her contemptuous rejection ? Have I not proved my spirit to be grovelling in proportion to the low birth which she despises ?”—

“ It was Lady Evelyn’s express wish, if you remember, to take upon herself the responsibility of your rupture. To both *her* father and your own, she most deliberately made the breach of engagement her act and deed.”

“ By which she has merely incurred the stigma of feminine caprice, in place of that of heartless pride,” rejoined Lord Fareham. “ But though the few cold lines she deigned to address to me on the occasion, expressly required that, if I ever loved her, I should assign no other

motive for her conduct, than the incompatibility of temper she chose to assume, she did not, I am certain, anticipate that the deception which by some unaccountable means became known to her, would be persisted in by myself. Had she not preserved such strict self-seclusion ever since, (apprehending, probably, the contempt with which the world is apt to visit faithlessness to such engagements as ours!) I should have taken occasion, to make her aware how recently—how *very* recently—I had become a party to the scheme of imposition, and the motives which determined my delay in its redress. But, from the first, she forbade me to write to her. From the first, she declined receiving my letters—afraid of contamination to her nobleness, from the mere handwriting of the beggar's bantling!—You, who have still access to her presence,—you, De Lisle, who frequent her father's house, ought to have done me this justice,—a justice I have been too proud to ask."

"If you remember," mildly remonstrated De Lisle, "you expressly conditioned with me, from the moment of your rupture, never to mention your name to Lady Evelyn!"

"And you have never done so?"—demanded Lord Fareham, fixing a scrutinizing glance upon his face.

"Never!—Lady Mary, who since her convalescence is beginning to take an interest in the movements of society proportionate to the length of time she was debarred by the infirmity of her health from mixing in the world, occasionally cross-questions me, in her sister's presence, concerning your opening prospects and recent triumphs."

"And Evelyn, of course, deigns not to take a part in the conversation."

"Neither by word nor look! She appears to experience a sort of resentment towards you, as though she had narrowly escaped injury at your hands."

"She is right!" cried Lord Fareham, bitterly.

"She might, indeed, have become the wife of an outcast!"—

"It sometimes strikes me," observed Sir James, carefully watching the countenance of his companion, "that had poor little Mary been the object of your attachment in place of her sister, *she* would not have so readily resigned you!"

"Lady Mary is a charming girl," said the young man, with a heavy sigh. "I loved her dearly as a sister. Any sister of Evelyn would have been precious to me. But Mary, from her gentle and affectionate disposition, endeared herself to me beyond expression. In any *other* light than the sister of my affianced wife, she never, of course, one moment, presented herself to my mind—never *could* and never *will*. I am thankful to her, however, for her sympathy.—Beggars have need to be thankful."

This singular hint soon afterwards received confirmation from an opposite quarter. Lord Fareham, true to the line of conduct he had

traced for himself, was now too thoroughly engrossed by the duties of parliament, to take much thought of the rumours of society ;—and save when seized by the button for gossip-persecution by Mr. Harbottle Driftington, or seated at some political dinner near Lord Thomas Aymer, he heard little of the marryings and givings in marriage, the balls and *déjeûners* of the *beau monde*, or the loves and hatreds of opera dancers, or any other of the important topics which appear to engross the minds of the greatest of public men, when let out of their iron cages for recreation.

Forced by the system to which he had bound himself into acceptance of office, this estrangement from the lighter pleasures of life became daily more pronounced ; and he had, of course, the satisfaction of learning from Aymer and Driftington that his old associates thought him “growing a deuce of a prig ;” and that a lively duchess of his acquaintance never saw them without inquiring why Lord Fareham seemed so

determined to bury himself, before his time, in the glorious obscurity of Westminster Abbey?—

All this was matter of indifference to him. His object was to lose sight of and be lost sight of by the world; and the jeers expended upon him by its triflers, were a matter of small account. Only once had he experienced a momentary interest in the idle talking of Driftington. After a formal dinner party at Lord Clantullin's, to which the chatterbox had contrived to be invited, they met at Bellamy's; when Driftington exclaimed, with his usual delicacy,

“ I have been dining to-day, where your name is strictly tabooed. Yet one of two fair sisters, who shall be nameless, managed to inquire of me, in the faintest whisper, *why* you were never seen now in society.”

“ Of course it was too simple an answer for *you* to make, that you did not know?” retorted Lord Fareham.

“ On the contrary. I *do* know, and there-

fore answered *avec connaissance de cause*, that like all new brooms, you were sweeping too clean by half;—that you had plunged head over ears into the roaring surges of public life,—dividing your time between your office and the House;—to the great detriment of other official men, who have sense enough to know that the steam which is always up, necessitates waste of fuel.”

Lord Fareham was touched by this inquiry. From the reserve Evelyn had imposed upon herself as regarded him, it could proceed only from Lady Mary,—his once kind sister. A few days afterwards, on his return from Kensington Palace, where he had been writing his name for a royal Duke, he observed at a distance, the carriage of Lord Clantullin proceeding towards the door of the least frequented part of Kensington Gardens. That it contained Lady Mary, about to take the gentle exercise suitable to her convalescent condition, he little doubted; and moved by the emotions naturally

arising from the presence of one long dear to him as a sister, he checked his horse, and watched her slowly descend from the carriage and, leaning heavily on the arm of a female attendant, enter the gardens.

As he proceeded into the park, bitter reflections on all this rushed into his mind.

“No longer attended by her *sister*!”—mused he. “Oh, no!—not by her sister!—Evelyn is weary of her task,—Evelyn has deserted *her* as she deserted *me*!—Resigned to the care of a servant.—Poor, poor Mary,—would I had found courage to speak to her! It would have pleased me beyond measure to see that fair and gentle creature restored to herself.—So kindly, too, as she has lately spoken of me, it had been only an act of common courtesy. And why not?—I have no quarrel with Mary. I have received no injury at *her* hands.”

And on the impulse of the moment, he turned his horse’s head; and having reached the gate adjoining Kensington Palace, gave it

to his groom, and followed the trace of one who, from her enfeebled condition, was scarcely likely to have proceeded further than a bench under the shade of one of the nearest thickets.

The gardens were just then in their choicest beauty. The verdure of May was filling the air with all the freshness of the youth of the year. The birds were singing among the lilac bushes, as though in honour of the universal holiday; while among the statelier groves, the bright cones of the horse-chesnut blossoms, vivified the sober green.

“How sweet,—how bright,—how spring-like!” murmured Lord Fareham, as he pursued his way over the elastic turf. “How wise of the invalid to come and refresh herself with this purer atmosphere.”

At that moment, he caught sight of her, winding her way under the shade of the lofty lime grove fronting the palace, still leaning on the arm of her attendant. In their spotless white dresses, amid the universal green, they

looked almost like spiritual beings. For at that hour, this secluded quarter of the gardens is little frequented ; and not another human being was in sight.

Deeply agitated by the prospect of the interview, Lord Fareham stood back among the trees, to collect himself—though Lady Mary was still at the distance of a hundred paces ; when lo ! to his great surprise, he saw advancing to meet her, in an opposite direction,—Sir James De Lisle !

It was scarcely to be supposed that, in a spot so unfrequented, the meeting was accidental ; more especially when, after being accosted by Sir James, hat in hand and with a degree of deference not altogether accordant with the familiarities of a rendezvous, the lady accepted his arm in place of that of her attendant, who fell discreetly into the background. After proceeding a short distance, they sat down on the nearest bench.

To interrupt such a *tête-à-tête* had of

course been indiscreet ; and though Lord Fareham was near enough to perceive by a glance that the form of Lady Mary was still bowed by weakness, and her face pale as alabaster, he retreated unobserved by either, and made his hasty way out of the gardens.

Still, the circumstance greatly surprised him. De Lisle had never avowed any peculiar interest in Lady Mary. His age seemed to render it unlikely that a lovely girl of eighteen should see in him more than the staid contemporary of her father ; and though it was certainly Sir James who had made him acquainted with the Clantullin family, there never seemed to exist between them any closer bond than is usual among people of the world.

The only way in which he could account for the startling familiarity grown up between the two was that, as an elderly man and one whose time was wholly at his own disposal, the invalid fancied she might, without self-compromise, secure his arm for her walk.

That evening, at the Carlton, the eternal Driftington lent himself most opportunely to the solution of his doubts, by suddenly exclaiming, the moment Sir James made his appearance,—

“By the way De Lisle—how do you get on with your pastoral?”—

“What pastoral?”—

“The Idyll you are certainly writing, or your brougham would not be seen, day after day, at the Bayswater gate, of Kensington Gardens,—sacred to poets and nursery maids.”

“My brougham and my pastoral are obliged to you for your solicitude,” replied De Lisle, angrily. “But you are under a mistake. No carriage of mine ever waits at Poet’s Corner.”

“Why, my dear fellow, I saw it there this very day! I know your brown horse as well as my own face. Your crest is a sheaf of arrows. I tell you I saw it there at three o’clock.”

“If it were worth while, I could easily prove

an alibi," retorted De Lisle; "but you may as well content yourself with my simple nay-say."

Lord Fareham was greatly astonished. Why this mystery?—Why this deceit?—Was this man fated to be in all instances the fountain-head of double-dealing?

Unlikely as it was that, thus discovered and pointed out, he should return to his haunts, Lord Fareham determined to proceed thither on the morrow, and ascertain whether the appearance of De Lisle's carriage at one gate, afforded the signal for that of Lord Clantullin at the other.

The day following, however, he was engaged on a committee at the House; nor was it till the usual Saturday gaol-delivery of member-life, that he was able to reach the Kensington gate at the same hour as before.

As he was dismounting from his horse, the footmen waiting at the gates touched their hats to him; and one of them, to whom, during his courtship days, Lord Fareham had been a liberal

benefactor, stood so near and with an air of such cordial and grateful respect, that the young Lord, by way of gracious recognition, inquired how Lady Mary was, and whether he should find her in the gardens?

“Her Ladyship is going on charmingly, my Lord!” replied the man. Then, recollecting himself, he seemed to fancy he might be doing good service to a pair of disunited lovers, by adding, “but it is Lady Evelyn who is in the gardens. Her Ladyship comes here most fine days, my Lord.”

“Evelyn?” It *could* not be Evelyn he had seen? That infirm figure—that pallid face—could not possibly be those of Lady Evelyn Lorn?—He had heard her spoken of as having suffered materially in health from long confinement with her invalid sister, but not to this extent. For his absence from the London ball-rooms and want of interest in their politics, left him still ignorant that Lady Evelyn Lorn had not been seen at a single fete of the season; and, till

now, no hint had reached him of her serious indisposition.

Determined instantly to verify his misgivings, he rushed into the gardens ; and without reserve, and wholly forgetting his desire of remaining an unobserved spectator of the proceedings of Sir James, made straight towards the spot where, as before, sat the fair invalid in her simple white dress and plain straw bonnet.—There, too, as before, sat Sir James De Lisle,—engaged in intimate conversation by her side !

A mist seemed to cover the eyes of Lord Fareham, as he approached.—For approach he did. To know that Evelyn was sitting there, suffering and altered, and not determine with his own eyes the extent of the evil, was impossible !

And yet, when he had ascertained the degree to which she was changed, he almost repented his precipitancy ! For so deep was his emotion at the sight, that, instead of passing on, according to his purpose, and leaving the pair unmolested to the private interview they had sought,

he advanced with both hands extended towards Lady Evelyn Lorn, in wild and incoherent greeting.

His voice was so broken that it would have been difficult to interpret a syllable he uttered ;—and so thoroughly was he over-powered by his feelings, that he had no power of ascertaining the effect produced by his most unexpected apparition on those of his companions.

Sir James De Lisle, as became his years and experience of the world, was the first to recover himself.

“ You have been calling at the palace, I conclude?”— said he. “ It is only assiduous courtiers like yourself, or prudent invalids like Lady Evelyn Lorn, who find their way to this ultima Thule, out of the way of the gay world, and its frequenters ;—so much out of the way, indeed, that her Ladyship might run some risk from footpads and highwaymen,” he continued, affecting a jocose vein, “ did she not secure the

attendance of some sober old cavalier like myself,—good only to frighten the crows and sturdy beggars."

While he was speaking, his two companions were gazing upon each other in wistful silence ; and when he ceased, instead of attempting a reply to his flippant apostrophe, Lord Fareham lifted his hat respectfully to Lady Evelyn, and passed on, as if pursuing his walk. And so steadily and unconsciously did he really pursue it, that he had reached the wallof the ha ha bounding Hyde Park in an opposite direction, before he sufficiently recovered himself to know where he was, or whither he was going.

" What can have brought her to this ?" was his first ejaculation. " What can have wrought so terrible a change ?—The struggle between pride and affection ? She really loved me then ! —I did not deceive myself ! Her affection for me was secondary only to the aristocratic instincts cultivated from her birth as a virtue

of station ! Alas!—dear as it is to me to know that the passion I have felt and feel for Evelyn, is less poorly requited than of late I have been led to suppose, rather a thousand times she were heartless, as first appearances induced me to suppose, than that she should have suffered thus!—They are a fragile race. Her mother died young, and died of grief;—Mary was only preserved from the grave by the most tender care and watchfulness. Of Evelyn's illness, no one seems to take heed. How little have I heard of it!—How little do they appear to watch over her!—No one with her but De Lisle, who appears to feel that, as the origin of our common misery, it is his duty to minister consolation.—And she has wanted consolation, then, all this time, while I was accusing her of indifference!”—

As his ideas gradually disentangled themselves from the confusion created by contending emotions, Lord Fareham recalled to mind, with surprise, the duplicity of De Lisle's conduct, as

regarded his private promenades in Kensington gardens.

“Why deny so strenuously that his carriage was in waiting? Perhaps, because he charitably wished to spare me the pain of learning Lady Evelyn’s condition.”

As he passed hurriedly on, it occurred to him, however, as strange that Sir James De Lisle should have maintained such obstinate reserve towards one united with him by bonds of such peculiar nature; and the aversion which, for some time past, had taken possession of his mind against the man who professed such warmth of friendship towards him, became still further embittered by the idea of his officiating as the comforter and bosom friend of Lady Evelyn Lorn.

“I remember that of old she never liked him,” mused Lord Fareham. “My father she adored;—to the excellencies of Lord Arlingham, she was prompt to render justice. But Sir James De Lisle she always mistrusted. I recol-

lect her making me as angry as I ever found heart to be with Evelyn, by reproaching me with my subjection to such a man. In vain I pleaded to her that he was an early friend,—the nearest kinsman of my mother. He was a man, she said, without candour,—without religion ;—or, (to borrow the jargon of a science in which she, poor girl, had faith,)—without Veneration, and without Hope. And yet, now that she is in trouble, she can find no surer stay to lean on, than this broken reed! Can it be?—(yet, why perplex myself with vain surmises)?—can it be that his society is dear to her from his supposed connexion with myself?”

That night, in the House, though a debate took place in which Lord Arlingham’s son had been expected to bear a prominent part, Lord Fareham sat mute and pre-absorbed; and when the Earl reproached him, the following morning, with having left his duties in less efficient hands, it little occurred to him to attribute his son’s supineness to mental depression.

In the rupture of Lord Fareham's engagements with Lady Evelyn Lorn, the whole blame had been assumed by the lady ; and as, though pleased with the match, Lord Arlington had, from the first, apprehended that so early a marriage might divert the attention of his son from official life, the breach was a matter easily reconciled to his feelings. He had consequently given less thought to the event than might have been expected ; reconciling himself to the loss of the alliance as easily as he had reconciled himself to its projection.

" You are ill, my dear boy," said he, on perceiving that his son offered no reply to his reproof of the idleness of the preceding night. " You have overworked yourself, Fareham ; for surely, you are not guilty of the weakness of repining after a girl who has proved herself unworthy the affection of a heart like your's ? Lady Evelyn's caprice in your favour,—(for I can call it nothing else)—was the mere dream of a sickly fancy !—Clantullin assured me that

his daughter could not be induced to assign any motive for her change of feeling towards you ; and little credit is she now doing herself in the eyes of the world, by according to the assiduities of a cold-blooded man of the world like De Lisle, what your franker nature failed to secure. She wanted a slave, it seems,—and she has found one !”

“ Do you mean to say that an attachment is supposed to exist between Sir James De Lisle and Lady Evelyn Lorn ?”— demanded Lord Fareham, gasping for breath.

“ So Lord Thomas Aymer assures me. De Lisle’s passion, he says, is obvious enough ;—the extent to which it is returned by the lady, I will not pretend to decide.”

The flush that overspread the pale face of Lord Fareham was naturally attributed by the Earl to indignation, at the supposition that he could have found a rival in a man more than double his age. It arose, on the contrary, from a hope,— a sudden hope, — that the terrible

secret revealed by De Lisle to himself and Lady Evelyn Lorn, might be a cruel fabrication for the purpose of disuniting them ;—a vile slander devised for a viler purpose.

A momentary gleam of joy dawned in his soul !—But its sunshine was soon overclouded. Even if enabled to prove the well-detailed narration of Sir James a tissue of falsehoods, how little would the discovery avail him !—Had not that monstrous calumny already served its purpose, by demonstrating the worthlessness of the heart on which were anchored his hopes of earthly happiness ?—If restored to himself, to his father—to his place in society—what was to console him for his loss of the affections of Lady Evelyn Lorn ?

It was essential, at least, to bring his doubts to an issue. On this new point of suspicion, he was resolved that not a day should be lost in obtaining the fullest and most conclusive explanations.

CHAPTER IX.

Tend me to-night;
Maybe, it is the period of your duty ;
Haply, you shall not see me more ; or if,
A mangled shadow. Perchance, to-morrow
You'll serve another master. I look on you
As one who takes his leave.

SHAKSPEARE.

“I HAVE just left the Coalition in the confusion of Babel !” cried Driftington, accosting Lord Fareham, as, a few hours afterwards, he was turning into Park Place, with the intention of demanding an explanation of De Lisle. “They say you sat like your grandsire cut in alabaster, last night, while Sitwell, and another lump of clay of a county member, were firing off squibs and crackers at the party. Aymer

declares that you are going fast asleep ; and that he shall send you a ticket of admission into the deaf and dumb institution."

"He *must* certainly conclude me to be deaf, or he would scarcely presume to indulge in impertinence at my expense," observed Lord Fareham, stiffly ; "and as you have taken the trouble to repeat to me his observation, perhaps you will also be at that of carrying him my reply."

"I have something better to do, my dear fellow!—" cried Driftington, alarmed at the result of his mischief-making.—"I have got a capital story against De Lisle, and am on my way to stick it into him. That young man we met with him (was it you or Aymer who was with me) ? and whom we thought so like Lord Arlingham, is certainly a son of his. I danced last night with the little fair-haired Middleton girl, who resides in his neighbourhood, and lost a good match, they say, by setting her cap at *you*, last winter (the old story of the dog

snatching at the shadow in the water)! for Sitwell won't be coaxed back again, and is not to be had at any price."

"But what has this to do with the son of Sir James De Lisle?"— demanded Lord Fareham, impatiently.

"Only that, having cross-questioned her and her quizzy old chaperon of a mother, about Holme Court, I find that though the young man in question was brought up in obscurity by De Lisle, it is supposed he will leave him his unentailed property."

Considering the recent assurance of inheritance made to him by Sir James, this intelligence afforded only additional proof of duplicity of the most plausible kind; and much as Lord Fareham disliked the prying and personality of Drifington, he was not sorry for the prospect of being a witness to the confusion of De Lisle, when exposed by the officious bantering of the professional gossip. But when they arrived at the door of the man thus doubly

menaced, it appeared that Sir James had suddenly left town.

“*Out of town?*”— said Lord Fareham, in an incredulous tone.

“Why I saw him at the Carlton only last night, and he said nothing of his departure!” added Driftington. “On the contrary, I was to meet him to-morrow, at a dinner at Lord Clantullin’s!”

“Sir James left town this morning, at an early hour,” persisted the butler, evidently in earnest.

“And *alone?*” demanded Driftington, in a tone which the portly gentleman would probably have resented, but that the interrogator was arm in arm with one to whom Holme Court and Park Place were instructed to do homage.

“Accompanied only by his own man,” was the reply.

“How long will he stay, d’ye think?” inquired Driftington, flippantly.

“I really am not at all aware, Sir,” replied the

man. “Sir James said nothing to me upon the subject—except, that I should be apprized, in due time, of his return.”

As there was nothing further to be asked, with propriety, Lord Fareham, sorely vexed, turned from the door. Still, he entertained no great anxiety. At that season of the year, it was unlikely that a man, like De Lisle, a member of the House, a *bon vivant*, a man of the world, should absent himself, for any length of time, from town. He resolved to call again in a day or two in Park Place, to satisfy himself further ; and, but that he scorned to interrogate a gossip like Drifftington, would fain have inquired the following day, what excuse De Lisle had offered for himself to the dinner party at Lord Clantullin’s, at which, having been one, he had doubtless ascertained the cause of Sir James’s absence.

That night, however, the adjourned debate of the night preceding was before the House ; and Fareham had been too strongly appealed to

by the Earl, to admit of perseverance in supineness. The question was one to which, a short time before, he had given his arduous attention. The only difficulty was, to fling aside his distracting load of care and the nervous consciousness that thrills in every nerve and relaxes every vital power of those who labour under mental depression, so as to command the full measure of his faculties for the service of the good cause.

The effort necessitated by this painful consciousness, wrought wonders; for never before had he spoken with such conciseness and force. The eyes of the loathing Sitwell glared at him from the opposition benches, like those of a jaguar at bay.

“ By Jove, I’m sorry De Lisle was not here to-night !” cried Lord Thomas Aymer, pushing towards him at the close of a triumphant division. “ You’ve surpassed yourself, Fareham, by a thousand cubits — as half the leading articles of to-morrow will inform you. But De

Lisle is the only man to convey news of your triumphs to Arlingham House.—*His* plausible demure face, carries credit with it.—Were I to tell your father you had been out Demosthenizing Demosthenes, Lord Arlingham would make me a civil bow, and conclude I was hoaxing him. However, round numbers speak for themselves!—A larger majority, by nine, than we counted upon!"

"And yet De Lisle away!"—carelessly observed Lord Fareham, for once regarding his enemy only as a vote.

"Ay, ay;—but *he's* paired off for the remainder of the session!"—replied Lord Thomas, moving away.

"*Paired off?*" reiterated his companion.

"With Heseltine. Heseltine's gone to the Highlands, for salmon fishing."

"*De Lisle* paired off for the remainder of the session?"—again repeated Lord Fareham, caring little for the pursuits of Mr. Heseltine.

"Ay, and without consulting any of us; which

he might just as well have done,—my father having promised to—”

“I beg your pardon for interrupting you,” resumed his companion. “But do you *really* mean to say that Sir James De Lisle has left town for the season?”—

“I should have imagined that you, who see him daily, knew it as well as I do,” observed Lord Thomas, a little affronted. “Heseltine mentioned it to me last night, at White’s. It was great joy to *him*! He had been endeavouring, in vain, to find a pair; and got De Lisle’s note on the subject, while we were dining together. De Lisle is a close fellow enough, I admit. But I fancied that at least you and Lord Arlingham were in his secrets.”

Next day, Lord Fareham addressed a letter to Sir James, at Holme Court,—a strenuous letter, insisting upon explanations and a release from existing engagements;—and utterly sleepless was the night preceding the morning, by whose post the answer was to arrive.

Not a syllable, however, was vouchsafed him. No postman's knock disturbed that morning the quietude of Arlingham House.

"He is probably on his way back," mused Lord Fareham. "Unwilling to commit himself by letter, he will come to town, if only to give me the explanations I have demanded."

All the morning, accordingly—(one of those fine summer mornings which fill even London with sunshine, and render the shade of the broad-leaved planes of Berkeley Square a pleasant prospect)—did he loiter at home, afraid of missing the expected visitor on whose words depended the welfare of his future life.

Towards dinner-time, when the atmosphere was astir with the roll of equipages and equestrians proceeding to the park, he issued forth, on pretence to himself of going down to the House; but fully determined to turn his horse aside into Park Place, and learn something of the movements of Sir James.

"Have you any news from Holme Court?"

he inquired of the servant, perceiving, by the closely shuttered aspect of the house, that its master was still absent.

“ None, my Lord.”

“ You are not expecting Sir James then, for a day or two ?”

“ For a day or two, my Lord ?” reiterated the astonished butler.

“ I wrote to Sir James, the day before yesterday, and having received no answer as I expected, thought he might be coming back earlier than he intended.”

“ You have, perhaps, Sir James’s direction then, my Lord ?” inquired the man, “ which Mr. Harbottle Driftington was inquiring for very anxiously, only half an hour ago ?”

“ Is he not at Holme Court ?—I wrote to Holme Court !—” exclaimed Lord Fareham.—“ *I concluded* he was at Holme Court.”

“ Your Lordship’s letter will doubtless be forwarded to the continent by the steward, as soon as he receives instructions from Sir James,

where the letters are to be addressed," said the man, evidently surprised; and still more so, when Lord Fareham, almost dropping his horse's bridle under the influence of the shock, exclaimed,

"To the *continent*?—You don't mean to say, that Sir James De Lisle is gone *abroad*?"

"It occurred to me the other day, my Lord, that you did not wish to speak on the subject before Mr. Drifftington, who is nowise connected with the family," observed the butler, a grave personage, who had been in Sir James De Lisle's establishment, from Lord Fareham's boyhood; "and I therefore entered into no particulars. Indeed, I knew and know none, further than that Sir James set off for Dover on the morning you called here; and that from what previously occurred, I believe the journey to have been a very sudden one."

"And you neither know his address, nor can conjecture the length of his stay?"—demanded Lord Fareham, in utter consternation.

“ Not in the slightest degree, my Lord. We have orders to send any letters that may arrive, to Sir James’s solicitor.—But it is only for safe custody. For I took the first packet myself, hoping to obtain some clue to the length of my master’s absence; and Mr. Poncit informed me had heard nothing from Sir James, and had no orders to forward anything. Only, the night previous to his departure from town, a small deed chest, containing papers of consequence, was despatched by Sir James’s own man Evans, to his office; as ususally the case when he contemplates a long absence from home.”

“ Most extraordinary!” burst from the lips of Lord Fareham.

“ Most extraordinary, indeed, my Lord! For only the day before he started, my master was as particular in his orders to the head-groom about shoeing his brown hack,—*(his park horse, my Lord)*, as if he entertained no thoughts of leaving town till the end of the season. The

last thing he did was to write note upon note of excuses, to I know not how many dinner parties he had accepted; besides giving me a list of eight and twenty persons to be put off for dinners next week, for which he had sent out cards."

"And can you imagine no reason for his sudden change of plan?"—

"None in the world, my Lord. It could not be news from abroad that called him away; for that day, he had no foreign letters."

"Has Sir James usually much foreign correspondence?"

"Next to none, my Lord. Perhaps not half a dozen letters in the year, since your Lordship returned from the continent."

"Nothing occurred then, to justify the suddenness of the journey?" demanded Lord Fareham.

"I know I may put confidence in your Lordship, to whom my master desires every servant in his establishment, to show deference as to

a son of his own,—” replied the man ; “ and, therefore, I may mention, what I should have been loth to say before Mr. Harbottle Driftington who is never tired of asking questions, about what can be no concern nor interest of his. But Sir James kept dinner waiting that last day, my Lord, more than an hour ;—and I need not remind your Lordship of his extreme punctuality as to hours,—punctual himself, and expecting punctuality in every body about him.”

“ Yes, yes—and he was late you say ?”

“ The brougham was only coming up the street as the clocks went nine ! I was afraid of some accident ; but all seemed right. The coachman having driven from the door, I inquired of Sir James, if dinner should be served ; when he answered that ‘ he had dined,’ in a voice so hoarse and unlike his own, that I saw directly something was amiss. And afterwards, when I asked John coachman, *where* Sir James could have dined to come home so out of sorts,

he answered that it must have been with the sparrows, in Kensington Gardens, for that he had been kept waiting at the gate till long after they were shut,—being only opened to my master, at last, for a gratuity given to the keeper."

" In short, he had *not* dined?"— cried Lord Fareham, impatiently.

" Certainly *not*, my Lord ;— yet he only ordered coffee. Then, Evans was sent for in a hurry, and ordered to pack for a journey ; but not a word even to *him*, of going abroad. All he knew was that they were to start very early in the morning ;—nor was it till the carriage returned next day from taking them to the station, I found Dover was the mark. Your Lordship will excuse my making so free, as to tell you all this. But I own, my Lord, I am a little uneasy on my master's account. For what between the hurry of departure, and the trouble of writing so many letters before going, Sir James looked as white as a ghost

when he left the house ; and on entering his room afterwards, I found he had actually never been in bed !”

Connecting all this intelligence with his own intense interest in the movements of De Lisle, Lord Fareham uttered a gasping sigh. He felt thoroughly defeated. He suspected himself to be the origin of this abrupt departure,—this virtual flight. The faithful servant was anxious for his master :—Lord Fareham for himself.

“ I will call again, should I obtain any intelligence of Sir James,” said he, trying to command himself. “ I will call again, at all events, to inquire whether you have heard from him or Evans,” added he. “ It is very likely that the newspapers may afford us the information of his route, which, for reasons of his own, your master has seen fit to withhold.”

But the newspapers told nothing more than that, Sir James De Lisle had taken his departure from Worthington’s Ship Inn, Dover, for

the continent ; and when Lord Fareham managed to inquire through the Foreign Office whether he had appeared in Paris, and for what country his passport was *visé*, nothing could be ascertained of his route.

“ I must take patience ! As strangely as he has fled, will he return again ? ” was Lord Fareham’s argument with himself.

But when a man thus avows that, “ he must take patience,” rarely does he abide by the prescription ; and the suspense of his situation became daily and hourly more intolerable.

“ If Evelyn had only treated me as a friend ! ” was his secret reflection. “ If she had frankly avowed her disinclination to wed with one ignobly born and forced by no fault of his own into so false a position, I might have taken counsel with *her* in this strait.—Through life, I have had confidence only in my—in Lord Arlingham, and Evelyn !—With Lord Arlingham, fatal necessity compels me to reserve. And *she* has thrown me off !—*She* disdains me too com-

pletely to admit of my asking of *her*, either advice or consolation!"

Then came the recollection of their agitated meeting; for deeply as his feelings were moved during that brief encounter, Lady Evelyn had not been less distressed.—No, she was *not* indifferent!—she *could* not be indifferent! Suffering she was,—suffering, infirm, miserable;—but he could not believe her to be indifferent!—

If, on the other hand, the slightest foundation existed for the rumour reported to him by Lord Arlingham, that, with inexplicable caprice, Lady Evelyn had transferred ~~her~~ affections to Sir James De Lisle, there was probably a mutual understanding between them; and if De Lisle was absenting himself for a time only to lessen the odium of treachery towards himself, Lord Clantullin's family were doubtless apprised of his movements, and able to furnish his address. Situated as Lord Fareham was towards them, how was this to be obtained, or even sought?

—Since the rupture, he had held no communication with any member of the family, save in that hurried interview with Lady Evelyn; and Driftington—the only channel that presented itself—was too much of a gossip to be trusted with even the secret of his ignorance.

“ You are sometimes at Lord Clantullin’s, I fancy ?”— said he to Lord Thomas Aymer, the next time they met.

“ Why, who the deuce told you so ?—That mischievous fellow, Driftington, I make no doubt ?”

“ Is there any particular treason in the case, that you should disclaim so violently ?” inquired Lord Fareham, much surprised.

“ None, unless through Driftington’s misrepresentations.”

“ My inquiry bears no reference to any saying of his. All I wish to ask is whether you ever hear the name of De Lisle mentioned among them ?”—

“ Never, that I recollect. Yes !—on my re-

ferring, the other day, to his sudden departure from England, they agreed with me that his absence was a great relief.”

“Lady Evelyn Lorn declared his absence to be a relief?”— demanded Lord Fareham, amazed at such duplicity.

“We said it,—that is, Mary and I said it;—and Lady Evelyn gave all the consent usually given by silence.”

Lord Fareham shrugged his shoulders.

“Would it be disagreeable to you to inquire whether Sir James’s address is known to them?” he next inquired. “I have letters of importance which I am desirous of forwarding.”

“Well, of all the odd things in this world!—that *you* should be ignorant of the direction of Sir James De Lisle, and address yourself to *me* to ask it for you of the Clantullin family!” cried Lord Thomas. “’Pon honour, my dear Fareham, you are beginning to talk and look like a *héros de mélodrame*. You are no longer the man you were last year. I positively can’t

make you out!—If I were as inquisitive as Driftington, I should pump the mystery out of you by ten millions of questions. First, you quarrel with your plighted love,—then, with your bosom friend;—and now, you are asking me, to whom you are usually as savage as a bear, for news of both of them!”—

Lord Fareham coloured deeply. There was only too much truth on the surface of the charge.

“I asked you for Sir James De Lisle’s address, and not for a lesson!” said he, haughtily. “I am sorry to have troubled you unnecessarily.”

Perceiving that he was about to move away in displeasure, Lord Thomas, who not only liked him for his own sake but was aware of the high value placed upon his services to the party by the Duke his father, seized his arm, and walked on with him.

“My dear fellow, if you love me, don’t look so confoundedly like Amadis de Gaul!” cried he. “If I have affronted you, I crave your pardon,

hat in hand. The fact is, that between you and Lady Evelyn, my place is no sinecure!—Cross-questioned by one, and cross-questioned by the other, I live between two fires!"

"I do not understand you," replied Lord Fareham, still a little sullen.

"I mean that I never enter Clantullin's house—(which, thanks to the fascination of Mary's gentle eyes, seldom occurs less than once in the twenty-four hours)—without being beset by her sister with interrogations concerning what is going on in the House, and the numbers of all possible divisions,—past, present, and to come,—all which is a fearful bore to me, who care for politics only as a matter of loaves and fishes.—(Don't look so shocked!—truth, even though murder, will out!)—Well!—as I was telling you, having chanced one day to make answer to her Ladyship's inquiries in words to this vile effect (which caused her hair to stand on end with horror much as your own, but for the sedative of Mirific Balsam, would do at

this moment!)—Mary pleaded with me in favour of her sister's importunate curiosity, by whispering that if Evelyn *did* somewhat resemble poor Driftington in the number and frivolousness of her queries, it was all for the sake of a certain friend of mine,—a young gentleman whom the morning papers call the shining light of the country, and so forth.”

Lord Thomas had now talked himself out of breath; and scarcely less breathless from emotion was his startled companion. Lady Evelyn, then *was* interested in his success;—Lady Evelyn *did* follow the progress of his public career!

“I promise you, my dear fellow,” resumed Lord Thomas Aymer, perceiving that his companion made no attempt at reply, “that if it should please my father and yours,—(I beg pardon,—your father and mine,)—to convert that worthy piece of domestic furniture, Lord Clantullin, into a servant of the public, as

President of the Council, or some other layman of the fine art of Statesmanship,—Lady Evelyn is perfectly qualified to officiate as his secretary. A few weeks ago, notwithstanding the delicacy of her health, Lady Mary assures me that she used to be roused at eight every morning, to enjoy the daily papers wet from the press,—dwelling on every syllable of the debates with a steadiness worthy the most pigtailed member of Boodle's!—Now that she is stronger;—nay, by comparison, well again,—she is often in the ventilator, at the risk of a severe cold or, like a sick chicken, dying of the gapes!"

Lord Thomas paused for a laugh; but not even a smile rewarded his efforts. Lord Fareham was absorbed heart and soul in all he was hearing. Even the information he had sought concerning Sir James De Lisle became comparatively unimportant!—The joy of learning that the woman still so dear to him,—the woman he had hoped to make his own in this world and the next,—was thus deeply interested in his

welfare, caused his heart to swell within him, till utterance became impossible.

Without replying a syllable to the flippant sally of his companion, he burst from him ; leaving it for Lord Thomas to relate as an excellent jest, on the morrow, to Lady Mary Lorn, that he had driven poor Fareham as thoroughly out of his wits as Hamlet, on the public *pavé* of Whitehall, by simply recounting to him the delight taken by her sister in reading and listening to his speeches.

That day, Lord Fareham forgot to call in Park Place for further news of De Lisle. His zeal to obtain release from his promise,—his zeal to extricate himself from the maze of deceit in which he had been wandering, seemed suddenly and unaccountably abated. The explanation that was to precipitate him from the vantage ground he had obtained in public opinion and the eyes of Lady Evelyn Lorn, might surely, he thought, be postponed a short time longer, without offence to his own conscience or injury to any !

Soon enough, at the close of the arduous session so vital to the interests of the Arlingham administration, to distract the mind of the minister with the sorrows of the man !

CHAPTER X.

If thou remember'st not the slightest folly,
That ever love did make thee run into,
Thou hast not loved !
Or, if thou hast not sat as I do now,
Wearying thy hearer in thy mistress' praise,
Thou hast not loved !
Or, if thou hast not broke from company,
Abruptly, as my passion now makes *me*,
Thou hast not loved !

SHAKSPEARE.

“WHY, Fareham, what have you been doing to yourself?” cried Mr. Harbottle Driftington, on meeting him in the vestibule of a ministerial *soirée* the following Wednesday — the latter arriving, the former departing. “Have you been down to Brighton, or up in a balloon, or what,—to bring yourself into condition?”

“I thank you!” was the cold reply. “The

house has not sat quite so late during the past week.”

“ But your hose are no longer ungartered, nor your beard unshorn!—Fareham’s himself again! When you first flung yourself off the Leucadian promontory into the sea of politics, you rose to the surface, looking like a drowned man—nay, almost like a drowned rat! Accept my congratulations on your new coat. I dare say you won’t speak less to the purpose to-morrow night, for looking less like a heathen. Going away so early?—Not twelve o’clock, by Jupiter!”

“ I have made my bow to Lady Finland, and have no further interest here.”

“ Who *has*? Cursed stupid things, these drums! But one *must* show one’s face at them, now and then; with the certainty of hearing and seeing nothing but what one saw last night, and shall be forced to look at again to-morrow, namely, Lady Fermanagh’s diamond fringe, and the flirtation between Lady

Mary Lorn and Aymer, under cover of the widest dowager or folding-door they can find to eclipse them."

"Lady Mary?—Is Aymer, then, paying attention to Lady Mary Lorn?"—

"*Is* he?—My dear Fareham, you will be asking me next, whether the Dutch have taken Holland!—Why, their billing and cooing has been the diversion of every party for the last month,—ever since the pretty little invalid came out again."

"You are aware how seldom I go to parties. But what object have they in concealing it?"

"Aymer has nothing, you know; that is, nothing to settle; and it is not likely Clantullin would jump at *him* for a son-in-law, as he did at you. Lord Clantullin is a worthy old gentleman, in his way; but as fond of the coin of the realm, as Harpagon. But, by Jove! here he comes; and for a wonder, with *both* his daughters!" cried Driftington. "The first time I have seen Lady Evelyn out this year! And how

pretty, though pale, she is looking ! I don't wonder De Lisle took her refusal so much to heart. Hillo, Fareham ! where on earth are you running to ?"—

Out of the cloak-room, and into his cab, on the unlucky impulse of the moment!—For scarcely had he turned the corner of the street, when, but for the dread of Driftington's chattering, he would fain have made his way back to Lady Finland's party, in order to enjoy, at a distance, the sight of that lovely and beloved face, a momentary glimpse of which had driven him at once with a throbbing heart from the room.

But it was too late. His exit had been noticed,—if not by the Clantullin party, by others who would certainly comment with surprise upon his speedy return ; and while execrating his own precipitancy, and threatening to be more his master on some future occasion, he was tormented by dread lest this first re-appearance in public of the elder and fairer of those

two beautiful and delicate sisters, might prove the last.

Still, the hasty glance he had ventured towards Lady Evelyn's countenance, had shown her to him in a very different light from the faded invalid of Kensington Gardens. The few last weeks had wrought as manifest a change in her health, as in his own spirits.

To refrain from surmises as to the origin of this change, was naturally impossible. Did it arise from the same source as the alteration in himself, so flippantly commented upon by Driftington?—Was she beginning to discern intrinsic value in the man she had countenanced?—Had his recent triumphs convinced her of the possibility that he might create a name and position for himself, more illustrious than those he might be forced to resign?—

For it was the pride engendered by such a conviction, which had inspired *him* with the power to fling aside the sackcloth and ashes of his humiliation. It was the self-reliance pro-

duced by the esteem he had conquered, which had sufficed to raise him above those mere distinctions of rank and fortune, on which, as essential to his marriage with Evelyn, he had been a moment tempted to set undue value. As day by day he found himself progressing in the estimation of his party and the confidence of the country, he grew assured of obtaining from Lord Arlingham, as a friend, the affection about to be withdrawn from him as a son ; till, for once, the usually pernicious influence of self-esteem had the effect of inspiring happiness, steadiness, and worth. As his sense of degradation was dissipated, he began to hope, and became capable of greater efforts ; and for a time, the absent enemy—the evil eye—the terrible Sir James De Lisle,—was forgotten !

As the session advanced, and the position of his party became more critical, greater responsibilities were devolving upon the shoulders on which the mantle of the prophet seemed suddenly to have fallen ; and the more arduous his

duties, the warmer the encouragement bestowed by him, whose affection as a father was as deeply interested in these triumphs, as his destinies as a minister. Conscious of the trust reposed in him by the country, and looking upon his son as the best expositor of his views, Lord Arlingham watched every syllable that proceeded from the lips of the young orator, and every turn and phase of his mind, with a twofold intensity that served only to incite Lord Fareham to more fruitful exertions.

Unwilling to disturb the tranquillity of his son's mind by personal allusions which he saw possessed the power of shaking its very basis, the Earl pointedly abstained from all notice of the mysterious absence of Sir James De Lisle. The uncontrollable emotions displayed by Lord Fareham whenever that name was mentioned, convinced his father that general report spoke truth in attributing the absence of their kinsman to disappointment in his pretensions to the hand of Lady Evelyn Lorn; nor was he sur-

prised at the disgust testified by Fareham towards one who, at the age of De Lisle—an age, when the passions are supposed to slumber,—could deliberately avail himself of the confidence reposed in him by the Clantuin family, to endeavour to supplant his young friend in the affections in which his whole happiness was embarked.

On the other hand, the Earl, convinced that the levity of conduct exhibited towards his son by Lady Evelyn in the rupture of their engagement, originated in misrepresentation on the part of De Lisle, felt more than ever disposed against him. His original mistrust of the wily kinsman of his wife, seemed justified by the event; nor was his antipathy towards the absentee diminished by the contempt certain to arise in the mind of a grave man of a certain age, towards a cotemporary whom he sees a prey to the turbulent passions of youth, or a victim to its follies.

The more he disliked and despised him,

however, the less was he inclined to mention his name to his son ; how little surmising the still deeper crimes and injuries by which that name was rendered hateful to the ears of the amiable young man, whose career had been so cruelly and gratuitously embittered by the revelations of De Lisle.

Lord Fareham more than shared the repugnance of the Earl to all mention of him whose sudden departure he was beginning to regard as providential.

“ So long as the hateful influence of his presence was upon me,” mused he, “ I should never have obtained sufficient self-command for the duties imposed upon me.—Now he is away, the past appears like the phantasm of a fearful dream.—I can again deceive myself.—I can again look upon yonder dear portrait, with the love and veneration of a son.—I can again recommend the welfare of my best friend to the protection of heaven, by the sacred name of father. De Lisle was born to be my curse—to

degrade, to deteriorate my very nature ! But, ‘ being gone, I am a man again ! ’ ”

Involved in the increasing excitement and complex duties of public life, he had fortunately little leisure to dwell upon the question. For of the twofold life of an official man during the session, the portion that involves the domestic affections, is rarely the predominant ; and, if the joys of his existence be occasionally dimmed by the interference of public duty, many a care is also deadened by the stir and responsibility of a position, on which the eye of the million, and the retrospective telescope of posterity, affix their scrutinizing glance.

One morning, as Lord Fareham was enjoying the sort of feverish doze that succeeds to great mental excitement,—bewildered in his dreams by remembered echoes of the cheers of the House,—indistinct visions of sneers from the opposition benches,—and all the clamour of the uproarious bear-garden which men call parliament,—he was disturbed by the still

more perplexing sound of some person or persons, groping round his darkened chamber.

“ It is I,—only I,—only Aymer !” cried the voice of Lord Thomas, in answer to a loud appeal of interrogation, which seemed to threaten pistols, or summary ejection. “ *Do* let me undraw the curtains!—I did not believe your fellow, when he assured me you were still asleep. Your old housekeeper, Goody Smith, whom I met toddling on the stairs, protested you were not home from the House till daylight,—so perhaps I *ought* to have believed him. If you want to sleep on, of course I can leave you, and return at a later hour—”

“ Thank you ; had I *wanted* to sleep on,” replied Lord Fareham, rubbing his eyes, “ you have thoroughly dispelled both the power and inclination. Is anything the matter, that you are astir thus early ?”

“ Early ?—Why ’tis twelve o’clock, or eleven certainly,—or not much after ten. No, nothing

is the matter. Only I am most confoundedly out of sorts."

Lord Fareham, smiling good humouredly, forbore to express an opinion that this was a slight motive for rushing into people's bed-rooms in the dark, and startling them from their slumbers.

" That wretched majority of last night, has driven me out of my senses!" resumed his guest.

" Nevertheless it exceeded the expectations of the Duke of Hythe and my father," observed Lord Fareham, now thoroughly awake.

" Ay,—but not mine and Lord Clantullin's,—which is a plaguy deal more to the purpose!" cried Lord Thomas, pacing up and down the room, as though it were a quarter-deck. " In such matters, the Earl, as I need not tell you, is blown about by every wind of doctrine. A horrible country neighbour of De Lisle's dined with him yesterday,—a fellow named Sitwell, the member for—no matter what stupid

borough in his humdrum county,—who assured him that unless we produced a triumphant majority last night, and carried every thing before us on Finland's motion on Monday, there was an end of us ;—first, a dissolution,—then, a change of ministry !”

“ But what signify the absurd notions of an obscure individual, like Mr. Sitwell ?” inquired Fareham, with unaffected indifference. “ We know that there will be no dissolution,—and that government was never stronger in the face of the country.”

“ Ay—but if Clantullin is persuaded otherwise ?”

“ Considering the small share he takes in politics—”

“ What have *politics* to do with it ?”—cried Lord Thomas, throwing himself fractiously into a chair. “ The old man has all but consented to my marriage with Mary, on the strength of my father's power of pushing me in my profession, in addition to my beggarly allowance.

And with the prospect of a change of ministry, Lord Clantullin is as likely as any one I know to order post-horses to his hateful family coach, and carry off the girls to Scotland, to be out of harm's way."

Lord Fareham now became thoroughly alive to the anxieties of his friend.

" And you are really engaged, then, to Lady Mary Lorn ?" he inquired, with sincere interest.

" I hope, my dear fellow, you are not going to refuse *your* consent ?" cried Lord Thomas, laughing heartily at his air of amazement. " And by the way, it *might* have been so. For, (will you believe it ?) when poor dear little Mary was so ill last winter, and never told her love,—(which was the real worm in the bud,) because my foolish, flirting manners left her in doubt as to the sincerity of my attachment, Lady Evelyn so thoroughly mistook the meaning of a few incoherent words that escaped her sister when light-headed from fever, as to fancy

it was *you* who had possession of her little fluttering heart!—You, Fareham!—Did you ever know any thing more ridiculous?—So like the infatuation of a woman,—to suppose that the man *she* loves, is the only one capable of inspiring a sincere passion!”—

In another moment, Lord Fareham was out of bed, ringing for his shaving water, and affording unmistakeable hints to his visitor, that he would rather dress than listen to further explanations; more especially when Lord Thomas saw fit to add to his previous communication, that most probably Lady Evelyn had indulged in this strange mistake because “*her wish was father to the thought!*”—

“She had, perhaps, discovered the incompatibility of temper between you, which she assigned as her reason for breaking her engagement; and thought that all might be smoothed over by promoting a match between you and her sister,” was his commentary on the fact.

So precisely the reverse, however, were Lord

Fareham's convictions on the subject, and so deeply was he moved by the belief that Evelyn had sacrificed his hand, in the mistaken idea of restoring health and happiness to her only sister, that, had Aymer fulfilled his wishes at that moment, by taking himself off, the operation of shaving with such tearful eyes and trembling hands, might have been attended with some danger of extinction to "the shining light of the century."

"And what, then, is your *object*?" cried he, coming almost angrily to the point with the untimely visitor, who seemed to have conceived a sudden attachment for his easy chair;—"and how, pray, can I assist you?"—

"By lending what the newspapers call your powerful aid to Monday's debate.—For the love of mercy, my dear fellow, support us with all your might and main, or—"

"For the love of Lord Arlingham, and my country, I trust I am not likely to be remiss," observed Lord Fareham, proudly.

"I fear you have dropped all communication with old Clantullin;—so that I have no chance of securing an antidote to Sitwell's "leperous distilments," in your more solid arguments with the old gentleman;"—inquired the anxious suitor of Lady Mary Lorn.

"It was of course, impossible for me under the circumstances attending our rupture, to renew my visits to the house," replied his friend, examining the edge of his razor, as if impatient to begin his toilet. "The usual courtesies of life are not the less exchanged between us when we meet in the world."

"Ay! but usual courtesies, my dear Fareham, will scarcely serve my turn! Indeed, I have more than once heard the old Lord express his regret, that your courtesies *were* so '*usual!*' Lord Clantullin is much attached to you, Fareham; and was observing to me the other day, that it was hard enough, because he had lost you as a son-in-law, he was to lose you as a friend. De Lisle, I know, strove to impress

them all with the conviction, that you cherished the most vindictive feelings towards the whole family."

"If I thought that," cried Lord Fareham, drawing the razor impetuously through his hand, to the great danger of dismemberment, "I would call there with you this very day!"—

"Then think it, and believe it!" cried Aymer; "for I give you my soul, that while that Judas of a kinsman of your's was prosecuting his suit to Lady Evelyn, he was never weary of attributing to *you* the sentiments of envy, hatred and malice, to which, the moment his unexpected proposals produced an explanation between them adverse to his hopes, his own bitter heart gave vent!—Had he not quitted England in the haste he did, trust me, I would have called him heavily to account for the intemperance of his conduct towards poor Evelyn, whom he appears to have both loved and hated like a madman."

More and more agitated by all he was hear-

ing, Lord Fareham was forced to have recourse to actual menaces, in order to get rid of his companion.

“ Unless you leave me to dress,” said he, “ I will *not* accompany you to Lord Clantullin’s,—I will not use my influence in your favour,—I will do nothing—*nothing* you have asked me !”

But that the brains of Lord Thomas were bewildered with love-sick visions of his own, he would probably have discovered from Fareham’s unusual perturbation and inconsistency, that it would have been as difficult for him to *refrain* from the threatened visit, as the utmost wishes of his companion could desire.

When, however, they reached the house (the approach to which had become as much a matter of emotion as ever to the minister’s son), though instantly admitted, in favour of Lord Thomas Aymer’s privileges in the family, the expectations of the latter were miserably disappointed on learning that the Earl was already gone to his club.

"How provoking!" cried he, on hearing this announcement from the servant, just as they reached the drawing-room door. "And after your making the sacrifice of coming here, my dear Fareham, for the sole purpose of talking him over!—Confoundedly vexatious, I must admit!—Perhaps you had rather *not* see Mary and her sister under the circumstances?—If so," he continued, seizing the servant by the skirts of his coat, as he was pressing forward to announce them, "if so, make your escape! You can come with me another day, at an earlier hour, when we are sure of finding Lord Clantullin."

Muttering something about, "not choosing to show disrespect to Lady Mary Lorn and her sister," Lord Fareham, instead of profiting by the opportunity of flight thus afforded, walked coolly on,—that is, *not* coolly,—but as steadily as he could, towards the table where Lady Evelyn sat poring over her Berlin work, as though the chief happiness left her in life con-

sisted in the numbering of her stitches. On hearing the announcement of visitors, she raised her quiet eyes; and her colour rose of itself, even unto vivid scarlet, on perceiving by how wholly undreamed of a guest her future brother-in-law was accompanied.

It required all the self-command Lord Fareham could possibly exercise, on witnessing these irrepressible symptoms of emotion, to refrain from snatching her hands at once into his own, and exclaiming, “Evelyn, have you then always loved me,—and do you love me still!”—

But he *did* command himself; for not alone was the restless incautious Lord Thomas present with them, but the painful recollection of his own degraded condition. Though already secretly convinced that the peculiarities of his position, even if known to Lady Evelyn, had exercised no share in her decision against him, he could not forget that he was an obscure and needy changeling,—how unworthy a suitor for one like *her*!

The warm greeting bestowed upon him by Lady Mary Lorn, who now hurried in from the further drawing-room to bid him a hearty welcome to the house, served to place the embarrassed silence of Evelyn in stronger relief; and it was perhaps to punish his volatile little love for such affectionate civilities to another, that Lord Thomas hastened to draw her back to the remote writing-table from whence she came,—whispering by the way, as though he had business of the utmost consequence to unfold;—though the business was probably of that very impalpable nature which lovers who meet daily, always find occasion to communicate in whispers.

And thus, Lord Fareham and Evelyn were left alone—or nearly alone; and considering that, for the next ten minutes, only broken and incoherent words were exchanged between them, it is amazing how readily they came to a mutual understanding of each other's sentiments. Congratulations on her sister's approaching happi-

ness were followed by expressions of surprise, on Lord Fareham's part, that a suspicion of her attachment to Aymer had never crossed his mind. Then, with uncontrollable impetuosity, he suddenly exclaimed, “but can it be possible,—dearest—dearest Evelyn,—that *you* were equally blind,—nay,—that you so misconceived her affections, as to suppose them fixed upon myself?”

A few words and a great deal of confusion avowed all; and Lord Fareham was about to possess himself of the slender hand that trembled invitingly on the embroidery frame of Lady Evelyn, when a sudden recollection of his fatal situation recalled him to himself.

Starting up, he walked to the window to recover breath; and was gathering courage to reapproach her, and attempt some less interesting topic of conversation, when lo! a sudden impulse overmastered his resolution.

“Enough—enough of concealments!” thought he. “Too much misery has been occasioned

to both, by unnatural reserve!" And in a subdued but firm voice, he forthwith succinctly related to her the terrible tale he had heard from Sir James De Lisle, and the resolution he had formed to confide all to Lord Arlingham on their return to Fareham Castle, at the close of the session.

"And you could think so meanly of me," exclaimed Lady Evelyn Lorn, tears stealing down her cheeks while she spoke, "as to suppose that my rejection had so vile a motive? — You could attribute to the woman you loved, and who loved *you* so dearly, such pitiful heartlessness, as to desert you for *this*! Oh! Fareham, Fareham!—of all the griefs I have undergone for your sake, such want of confidence on *your* part is the most afflicting of all!"

To a man so happy as the young "light of the century," at that moment, it proved no very difficult feat of eloquence to convince her that, entangled as he was by the meshes of Sir

James De Lisle, it had been impossible to judge fairly of her sentiments or opinions.

“ If I have erred, I have also suffered,” said he, in conclusion. “ But Heaven knows my worst sufferings are fully compensated, by the joy of this moment ;—even with the certainty I anticipate, that Lord Clantullin will be far less generously disposed than yourself towards the miserable outcast, who, for a time, still presumes to call himself Lord Arlingham’s son.”

“ You wrong yourself and *us* to say so !” cried she, indifferent to the fact that the attention of her sister and Lord Thomas was becoming gradually excited by the eagerness of her gestures. “ My father now understands and appreciates your worth. You are no longer the nameless boy, over whom he used last year to exercise some degree of authority. Did you only know how often he has expressed to me his wonder and displeasure at my affected change of sentiments towards you,—how often he has dwelt on your growing distinctions,—

and how constantly his heart has yearned towards you, as towards a son lost to his old age! Do not injure my poor dear father by the supposition that, even as the adopted of his friend and chosen of his daughter, he will not warmly welcome you into his family."

Thus encouraged, it was not very difficult for Lord Fareham to hope so too. Before they met again on the morrow, however,—(still on pretext to Aymer of a projected political argumentation with the Earl), the intelligent mind of Lady Evelyn had considered and re-considered the question, till a thousand inconsistencies sprang to view in the history related by Sir James.

"He tells you," said she, "that the real infant of Lord and Lady Arlingham died in its infancy. Yet a child, a foundling was unquestionably reared by him,—whom he has hitherto designated as the orphan of one of

his tenants. I have seen this young man, who is of your own age—”

“ And you believe *him* to be the still surviving son of Lord Arlingham ?” demanded the young Lord, pale with dismay.

“ On the contrary, I believe him to be the unfortunate child he described to you; reared by himself from motives of charity, but subsequently seized upon as an implement of mischief. No sooner had he conceived that odious passion for myself, (of the existence of which, till the declaration passed his lips, I had as little suspicion as yourself), than all means appeared lawful to him, which purported to disunite me from you, and leave me, (as he trusted), at his disposal. It was he who first hinted to me that Mary’s illness arose from a disappointment of the affections, of which *you* were the object. Then, doubting perhaps, my power of controlling my own, he devised this vile calumny,—this cruel slander. The two

falsehoods united so far served his purpose, as to dissolve our engagement. That they would eventually make me his wife he, doubtless, further contemplated ; and then, it would have mattered little to a wretch like De Lisle, that the truth came to light,—regardless of our broken hearts, or his tarnished honour ! —Heaven, dearest Fareham, had better care of us—”

“ Say rather, that your own steadfast affection had better care of *me* !” interrupted Lord Fareham. “ Oh ! that this wild surmise of your imagination, dear Evelyn, might prove true !—That the blood in my veins might still be worthy of you, by uniting me in kindred with the best of men.”

The days that succeeded, if occasionally chequered by anxiety, were replete with happiness for the young couple. It was agreed between them that the moment parliament was up, Lord Fareham should proceed to the continent, trace step by step and stage by stage, the route

of Sir James De Lisle, till he could bring him to a personal explanation, and demand the instant surrender of all vouchers connected with the pretended exchange of children; besides sufficient attestation of the origin of the youth he had adopted.

Till this was effected,—till perfect conviction glared upon them,—Lady Evelyn refused the slightest credit to a tale, assigning ignoble blood to the man of her heart; and *if* proved, she expressed her full determination to abide by his change of fortunes, and persist to the utmost in her engagements.

Meanwhile, there was no occasion to unsettle the mind of her father by premature disclosures; and it was with no small delight that Lord Clantullin watched the gradual re-establishment in his house of the son-in-law, in whose former disappointment he had taken so affectionate a part.

“No accounting for the caprice of woman’s nature!” was the argument by which he re-

conciled to himself the inconsistency of his daughter. “ I suppose Evelyn does not wish to see her sister married before her. Or perhaps she has grown wiser, before it was too late! —No matter what the cause which secures the most amiable and rising young man in England, to become the happy husband of my child.”

In these friendly sentiments, Lord Arlingham more than coincided ;—for he had the satisfaction of perceiving that, so far from diminishing his zeal in political life, the renewal of Lord Fareham’s attachment served only to stimulate his labours ;—Lady Evelyn Lorn being too proud of his official triumphs, to admit of any relaxation for the indulgence of their lighter pleasures. To know that she was among his auditors, added fire to his parliamentary eloquence and joy to his success !

CHAPTER XI.

He dies and makes no sign !
Oh God !—Forgive him !

SHAKSPEARE.

THE season was drawing to a close. The families of heavy country Baronets were beginning to pack their heavy family waggons, and depart for their heavy country seats ; and as the throng became less dense, groupings were forced upon the notice of the vulgar heretofore concealed by the intervention of the polite crowd.

The engagement of Lady Mary Lorn, and Lord Thomas Aymer accordingly afforded a paragraph to the daily papers, which had no longer more than an occasional ball, or official

dinner, to furnish matter for their fashionable intelligence ; and when, at the end of the week, the news became by repetition from paper to paper somewhat stale, a journal more speculative than the rest ventured to add, that “ if rumour might be credited, the two daughters of the noble House of Clantullin were likely to make a new and most auspicious bond of union, between the heads of the Coalition administration.”

On the theme thus afforded, other papers produced variations, *ad libitum* ; till, at length, the “ marriage of Lord Fareham, only son of the Earl of Arlingham, with Lady Evelyn Lorn, eldest daughter of the Earl of Clantullin, was formally announced.”

Great was the annoyance of those whom the newspapers designated as the happy pair ! For under all the circumstances, denial was impossible. They were continually together,—together as of old, when their engagement was a matter of public avowal. Yet Lord Fareham

was keenly alive to the probability that, should the report, by the aid of that European missive, Galignani's Messenger, reach the ears of De Lisle, he would not fail to address to Lord Clantullin a disclosure of the terrible mystery overclouding the prospects of his future son-in-law. Lady Evelyn, however, was firm and courageous.

"He will not *dare* address to my father," said she, "the monstrous falsehood which your delicacy of feeling alone invested with probability. Even suppose the worst not only revealed, but proved, you have nothing to fear. I am yours, dearest Fareham, still and for ever!"—

With such encouragement to happiness, Lord Fareham soon learned to "defy augury;" and the last debates of the closing session were brightened by a still more arduous exercise of his abilities.

Nevertheless, there were moments,—even amid the cheers of the House,—even amid the still more bewildering whispers conveying as-

surance of Evelyn's affection,—when a sudden and indescribable panic, recalled to his mind the instability of his joys,—like a sprig of yew suddenly discovered in the midst of a glowing group of summer roses. Every morning, the post-knock caused his heart to beat impetuously, with apprehensions of an interruption to his happiness ; nor was a letter ever brought to Lord Arlingham or the father of Lady Evelyn, in his presence, without chilling his very soul with the dread that it might prove to be in the handwriting of Sir James De Lisle. Since he had refrained from tormenting his gentle love with the avowal of these terrors, they had become only the more poignant ; and his health was gradually giving way under the influence of a perpetual flurry of spirits.

Lord Fareham's sole comfort consisted in the knowledge that only a few more days remained unexpired of the session ; when, with the sense of having fully discharged his duty to Lord Arlingham, he might set forth on his

expedition to the continent for the solution of that terrible enigma.

Two nights before the prorogation of parliament, however, just as, after a tedious debate, he was preparing to quit the House which a sultry August night rendered past all power of ventilation,—jaded and weary,—with his spirits nearly as much depressed as his bodily frame,—he was pounced upon by Harbottle Driftington!—

“ My dear Fareham,” cried he, “ accept my sincerest condolence!—I was quite surprised to see you here to-night, in your place, after the terrible story in the evening papers! However, you did very wisely and kindly in lending us your aid, and defying the impertinent scrutiny of the world.”

Lord Fareham almost staggered from the detaining grasp of his importunate companion.

“ What story?” he exclaimed, scarcely able to breathe. “ I do not understand you!”

“ This sad story about De Lisle!—But *you*

must have been aware of it all, before it got into print!"

"I am at present ignorant what *has* got into print," faltered Lord Fareham, directing his steps with the view of instantly referring to the papers rather than to his companion, for further explanations.

But Driftington would not be shaken off.

"I confess I never expected De Lisle to be a man of such intensity of passion," said he. "He always appeared to *me* a reserved, callous, selfish fellow; attached only to *you*, and consequently the last man on earth to do you an injury. But you may remember, I was the first person to apprise you of the existence of that mysterious youth."

"If you will only allow me to glance at the Globe or Standard," murmured the almost breathless Fareham.

"Nay, my dear fellow,—if you are really in the dark, (of which I had not the least idea when I accosted you), I can tell you the whole

story. In one word, De Lisle who, as I need not inform you, has been touring in the Pyrenees has put an end to himself. A letter from Bagnères de Bigorre to the Editor of the *Courier*, announces his having shot himself in a fit of violent exasperation ; and it was reported to-night at Boodle's, (which he has frequented, you know, these thirty years), that he has left his whole fortune to his adopted son. Bad news for *you*, Fareham, who, I fancy, are his next of kin!"

Instead of replying, Lord Fareham addressed himself to the perusal of the newspapers, which for a wonder, contained *precisely* the intelligence communicated by Drifftington ; tempered by suitable expressions of horror at the determined nature of the suicide.

To obtain further information at that hour of the night, was impossible. The servants in Park Place must have been many hours asleep. No means of even appealing to the sympathy of Lady Evelyn ! The remainder of the night

must necessarily be agonised by solitary suspense ; to be exchanged, perhaps, when morning dawned, for certitude still harder to be borne.

That the last rash act of his enemy had been accelerated by the rumour of his marriage with Lady Evelyn, Lord Fareham entertained little doubt. But that closing crime had, in all probability, been preceded by some further attempt at vengeance on himself !

Without having retired to bed, at the earliest possible hour he was at the door in Park Place ; trusting to obtain particulars, previous to his interview with Lord Arlingham. But he could hear nothing more than had been communicated by the newspapers ; the sincere affliction of the old family servants rendering it difficult to press his inquiries. All the butler had to relate was, that his master had been committed to the grave the day following his fearful act ; and that Evans, who was on his road home, would explain all.

“ And he will, perhaps, be weeks on the

road!" exclaimed Lord Fareham, in utter despair; bitterly accusing himself of supineness in not having set forth in search of De Lisle, the very day following his reconciliation with Evelyn Lorn.

Struck by the altered appearance of the young Lord, the butler, attributing his deep emotion to the anxieties of next of kinship to Holme Court, suggested that his Lordship might possibly obtain further information from the family lawyer in Bloomsbury; and to Pounct's office Lord Fareham instantly hurried, though with far other than the views attributed to him.

"Your Lordship, I perceive, has received my letter," was the opening salutation of Sir James De Lisle's solicitor, on the announcement of his name. "I have to thank you, my Lord, for this prompt compliance with my request for an interview."

No need to apprise Mr. Pounct, that the letter must have crossed him on the way, and that his visit was spontaneous.

"I am only awaiting the arrival of Mr. Meredyth from Cambridge," resumed the lawyer, "to open in his presence and yours, the will of my late unfortunate client. Such, my Lord, were the instructions of Sir James De Lisle, in the event of mischance occurring to him during his absence from England. Presentiments of evil, nay, perhaps fatal intentions, had possession of his mind at the moment of his departure from town. His last act was to consign to my custody family papers of importance, instructing me that he had constituted one Lawrence Meredyth, his sole heir, on condition of his assuming the family name."

"And this young man," cried Lord Fareham, with a degree of emotion naturally ascribed by the lawyer to disappointment of his expectations of inheritance, "this young man was by birth an obscure orphan,—an adventurer picked up in infancy by Sir James?"—

"I fear so. I have reason to suppose that your Lordship's claims to this fine property

have been set aside in favour of a person issued from the lowest dregs of the populace."

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed Lord Fareham, gasping for breath, and with a fervour of sincerity which induced the sober Mr. Pouncit to apprehend that the brains of the whole De Lisle family might be somewhat infirm.

"The motives of displeasure against your Lordship, which may have influenced my late client to alter the dispositions of his will," resumed the astonished lawyer, "are probably detailed in a letter, committed by Sir James to my charge, to be delivered to your Lordship in the event of his decease."

"A letter to *me*?" cried Lord Fareham, impatiently.

"Such, my Lord, was my motive for requesting the favour of seeing you here," resumed Mr. Pouncit, deliberately unlocking a patent deed chest, bearing the name of the deceased Baronet; and though the eager hands into which he now proceeded to deliver a voluminous

packet, trembled so violently as to be scarcely able to break the seals, the judicious lawyer kept prosing and descanting on, concerning the nature of the De Lisle estate and other questions connected with the property, as calmly as though the agitated young man before him had been a professional brother.

At length, grown desperate under this grievous persecution, Lord Fareham demanded to be left alone for the perusal of an important document, in a tone of impetuosity that overawed even the professional self-possession of Mr. Pouncit; who glided out of the room with an air of pretended unconcern, like a keeper in search of a strait waistcoat for a dangerous patient.

Yet, no sooner was Lord Fareham left alone, than it became *his* turn to succumb,—overmastered by the contending emotions of his soul. After opening the packet, many minutes elapsed ere the mistiness of sight produced by the writing of one whose hand, since those lines

were traced, had perpetrated an act so terrible, admitted of decyphering the contents.

At length, a strong effort enabled him to peruse the following bitter lines :

“ When this letter meets your eye, you will be delivered from my influence ; but it will be yours, Fareham, that has driven me into the grave ! — Deem not, therefore, that I am about to seek your pardon for sufferings inflicted. Reflect upon mine ; and wonder not that now, even *now*, I breathe back upon you a curse that I would fain perpetuate upon your head, and the heads of your children, unto the third and fourth generation ! —

“ I was, I suppose, born of an implacable nature. The only object I remember to have loved in childhood, was your heartless mother ; who, violating every vow which the fond devotion of my youth obtained, bestowed her hand and heart upon another ! Fareham ! — when I first beheld Selina with her hand fondly clasped in that of your father, I swore to be avenged

upon both, even were it at the cost of my salvation !

“ In adopting the unfortunate child, which an evil chance threw in my way, my first idea was to substitute it for yourself. But the fidelity of your old nurse defeated my hopes. I had trusted too far on my influence over her. The excitement of a contest with me, on the subject, produced her sudden death !

“ Still, my projects of revenge were not abandoned. Over your boyhood, Fareham, did I watch, with mingled love and hatred. You were my sole object in life. Selina had escaped me. But *you* survived ;—a vulnerable point through which it seemed easy to strike to her heart, even through the windings of her shroud. Had you seen what she was when she beguiled me into quitting England by promises of unchangeable fidelity, you would understand my feelings !—

“ Enthralled by a master passion, my youth passed loveless and unendeared away. So long

as your father's wife survived, there was no other woman for me on earth; and when she sank into an early grave, the spirit of vengeance seemed to assume her form, promising me compensation for the miseries of my wasted existence.

" For a time, I cherished a vain hope that your nature might prove such as to inflict disappointment on your father. But I was soon undeceived. A golden summer succeeded to an auspicious spring; and watching you as I did with the intense hatred of jealousy, not a flaw could I discover affording promise of evil to come!—

" At length, you loved; and the eagerness wherewith I examined the object of your young affections, trusting that *she*, at least, would afford me a source of revenge, revealed to me all the charms, all the excellencies, all the nobility of heart and soul, of Evelyn Lorn.

" Fatal discovery!—I was taken in my own toils! The constancy of my attachment to your

mother, had secured to my feelings a sort of unnatural freshness,—a second summer; and in the first instance an object of interest to me solely on *your* account, the woman you loved soon became passionately dear on her own. Lady Evelyn appeared to my diseased soul the legitimate successor to my love for Selina De Lisle,—an emanation as it were from her memory,—a bright phantom issuing from her grave!—Judge whether my sentiments towards you were softened by the knowledge that again I was fated to despair,—that this gentle being was to become your wife!—

“ I swore that this should never be! Satisfied that a sentiment of honour would prevent your claiming the fulfilment of her engagement if persuaded of the ignominy of your birth, the distorted fragments of my real history were easily so adjusted as to distract your mind. The impression with which I had already inspired Lady Evelyn of her sister’s attachment, effected the rest; and then, Fareham, then,

when for a time I succeeded in disuniting you, and recommending myself to her society as the only person from whom she could obtain tidings of your welfare, then, indeed, I entertained hopes of doubling the sweetness of my revenge. It seemed impossible she could remain insensible to the intensity of passion burning in my heart. The deference with which she used to listen to me,—the gratitude with which she requited my devotion,—the feebleness and gentleness produced by her declining health, served to confirm my power over her mind.—Yes ! I flattered myself—madman that I was,—that, *in time*, I should be beloved ! And oh ! the agony of waking from that heavenly dream ! the second cruel agony of my life,—and both, *both* derived from the same execrated source !

“ To-morrow, I quit England for ever. I will not expose myself to the misery of seeing your face again,—to the shame of again looking upon Evelyn’s. I go forth into banishment, to end in curses and imprecations, the wretched

days blighted by the influence of you and yours!—

“ The spoils of the exile shall at least serve to enrich one endeared to me by a long cherished hope that he might become the instrument of my revenge. He *shall* be so, though in a less degree, by excluding you from the heritage of your maternal ancestors.

“ Tell all this to Evelyn. Half my love for *her* originated in hatred of yourself; and both—*both* in the wanton faithlessness of your mother. Let women lay this to their hearts;—that the monstrous brood of evil passions which devastates society, is generated by their corruption. I go from hence with loathing in my heart—and on my lips a ——”

The letter appeared to have been abruptly broken off, as if in a paroxysm of frenzy; and a suspicion now arose in the mind of Lord Fareham, which the intelligence soon afterwards brought to England by the faithful servant of

Sir James De Lisle tended to confirm, that, for some time past, the mind of his unfortunate master had been subject to aberration. It appeared that the state of excitement under the influence of which he terminated his existence, was the result of the announcement of Lord Fareham's approaching marriage, communicated by the public journals.

So manifest, indeed, were the symptoms of insanity in his testamentary dispositions, that they would probably have been untenable in a court of law, had Lord Fareham, as nearest of kin to the deceased, been disposed to dispute them. But he was too well aware of the intentions of De Lisle, and entertained too heartfelt an abhorrence of himself, his name, and property, not to leave in undisputed possession the young man in whose favour fortune had exercised one of those signal caprices, which every now and then diversify the monotonous tenour of this world.

Moreover, the happiness of Lord Fareham

was now too perfect to admit of undue coveting of silver or gold.

"After all," said he, when, after throwing himself into the arms of his beloved father, he indulged in all the expansion of joy arising from restoration to that happy tie,—“after all, but for the bitter hours I have endured during the last few months, I should never have fully appreciated my worldly position, or been sufficiently thankful to the bounty of Providence. How calmly I used to contemplate the distinction of being son to such a father! How little I understood the value of Evelyn's affection! Alas!—if the thought of having given me pain afforded any solace to my perverse and unfortunate kinsman, in his last moments, what torture would it not have inflicted upon him to foresee that, but for his malicious intervention, I should never have fully enjoyed the happiness of the present hour.”

Nor has this feeling become blunted by a long series of worldly prosperity. Though Lord

Fareham has now attained the highest honours of the state, while Fareham Castle rings with the joyous voices of his beautiful children, the name of Holme Court or of its present possessor is never mentioned before him, without overclouding his brow with momentary sadness, or calling up in his heart a sentiment of profound gratitude to Heaven.

Vainly has Mr. Harbottle Drifftington endeavoured, by his unsilenceable interrogation of Lord and Lady Thomas Aymer, to discover the motives which render the name of Sir James De Lisle, an interdicted topic at Fareham Castle.

“ It is the strangest thing,” said he, the other day, (after interrupting at Middleton Hall, the renewal of the old courtship between Sitswell, and the superanuated coquette, his discarded love), “ but Lord Fareham cannot endure the smallest allusion to your neighbour at Holme Court!”—

“ Men of Lord Fareham’s class seldom wit-

ness with patience the elevation of a *parvenu*!" observed Sitwell, with a sneer.

"Men of any class seldom relish being ousted out of an inheritance!" added Sir Edward Middleton.

"And yet, if you believe me," cried Driftington, "Lord Thomas Aymer had the audacity to assure me the other day, that the name of Sir James De Lisle was held sacred by the Farehams, only because but for *him*, they should never have known how to appreciate the value of a BIRTHRIGHT!"—

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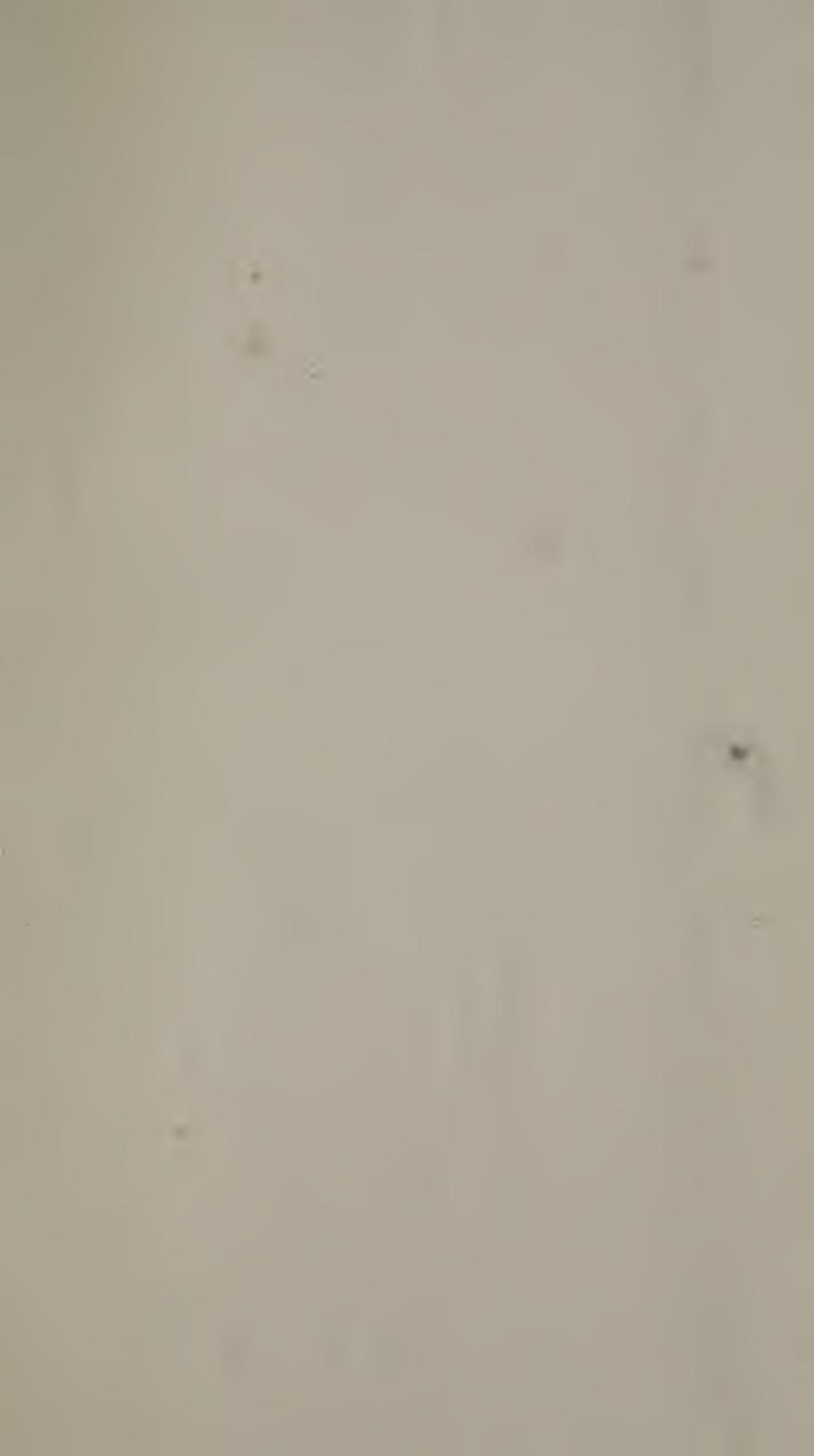
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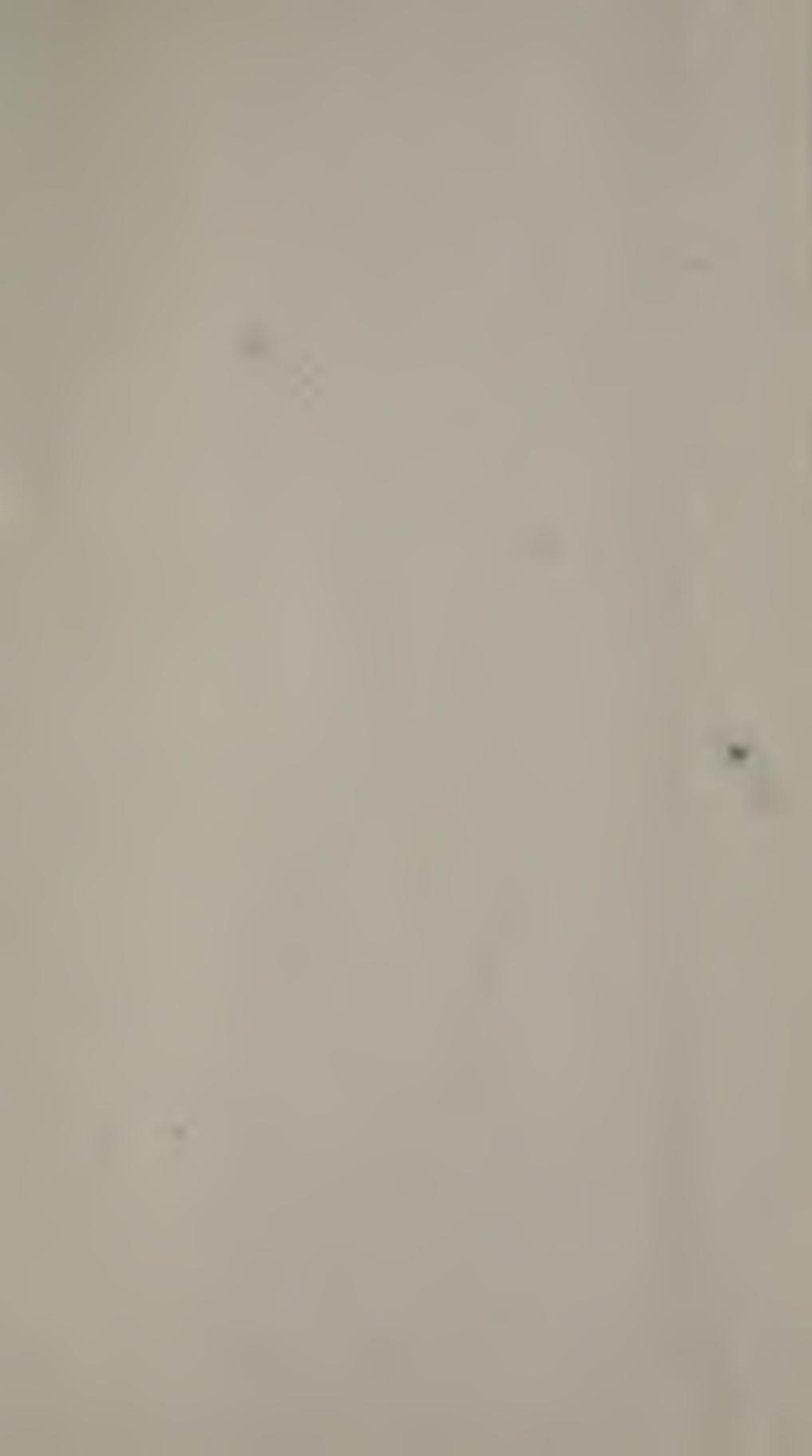
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